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Woman's Weekly

2 May 2023

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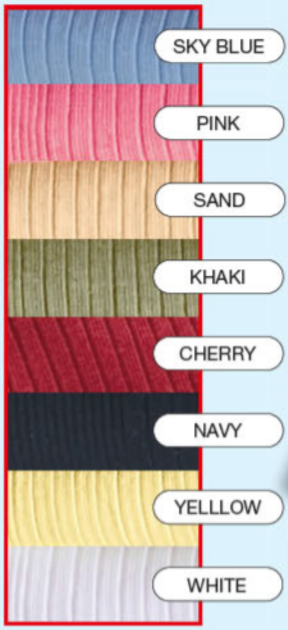

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Ribbed knit T-shirt with round neckline

This woman's T-shirt is updated with a ribbed knit for fashionable style. A basic that goes with everything: skirts, long and cropped trousers, or jeans, it's always perfect. It is available in a range of summer colours designed for easy and flattering pairings. A wardrobe essential! Taped edging along the neckline. Short sleeves. Meticulous assembly, topstitched finish. Length 62cm (24½in. approx.).

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Hello!

Ancient and modern

One funny thing about getting older is the sudden realisation that many of the everyday things we now encounter in life didn't exist when we were born. The internet and social media are obvious examples, but even lots of the foods we take for granted now were either rare or non-existent when I was born in 1957. For example, ciabatta, the Italian bread, now a UK supermarket staple, didn't even exist in Italy before 1982. And one of my favourite British puddings, banoffee pie, was only invented in East Sussex in 1971! But if you share my affection for this delicious dessert, look out for our recipe on page 35.

Geoff

EDITOR
geoffrey.palmer@futurenet.com

COVER PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

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FROM US TO YOU

Good to SHARE

A festival of colour, nourishing nectar and an absent-minded cat

Grow wild!

Create a floral feast for pollinators in your garden with No Mow May. Conservation charity Plantlife is encouraging Brits to let their lawns grow freely throughout the month of May. By locking up your lawnmower, you'll allow long grasses and wild flowers to flourish, and provide nectar for bumblebees, butterflies and other vital pollinators.

Since the 1930s, the UK has lost nearly 7.5 million acres of meadows and pastures, but the 15 million gardens across Britain have great potential to boost our wildlife.

✱ Visit plantlife.org.uk

SEASIDE SPECTACULAR

Experience an explosion of creative energy at Brighton Fringe Festival, in East Sussex, which runs from 5 May to 4 June. Hundreds of wild and wonderful events will be taking place across the city, from rip-roaring comedy acts and live theatre to interactive workshops.

✱ To find out more details and book tickets, go to brightonfringe.org

Did you know?

Most of the announcements made on the London Underground were recorded by a husband-and-wife team. While Elinor Hamilton's messages remind passengers about which trains to catch, Phil Sayer voiced the safety warnings.

On this day in history

'Is that you, Mr MacDonald?' The very first telephone call between Britain and Australia took place on 29 April 1930. After months of experimenting, wireless telephone communication successfully linked the two countries across thousands of miles. Australia's Prime Minister James Scullin spoke with British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald on the phone for 15 minutes, with around a dozen people present.

WORDS: ANNABEL KEMP. PHOTOS: GETTY, LYNSEYNICOLPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.UK, PLANTLIFE

CROWNING GLORIES

With the coronation of King Charles just around the corner, a fascinating new book celebrates the history of British coronations throughout the centuries.

✱ ***The Throne: 1,000 Years of British Coronations*** **by Ian Lloyd (£16.99, HB, The History Press Ltd) is packed with anecdotes and royal trivia.**

THE THRONE
1,000 YEARS OF BRITISH CORONATIONS
SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
IAN LLOYD

PURRFECT PRODUCTION

One of our favourite felines is on tour. *Mog The Forgetful Cat* tells the tale of an adventurous kitty who catches a burglar, visits the vet and eats plenty of eggs. Based on Judith Kerr's bestselling Mog picture books, this charming adaptation is bursting with catchy songs and enchanting animals. It's going to be on at Worthing's Pavilion Theatre, from 6-7 May, with tickets from £12 at wtm.uk

WHO'S THERE?

Do you answer the front door if you're not expecting visitors? A YouGov survey reveals that while 69% of Brits are likely to open up, over a quarter of us (27%) would probably ignore anyone who shows up unannounced.

Money saving tip

Bag bargains at police auctions, where lost and stolen items that can't be returned to their owners are sold off. Items can include bikes and laptops for a fraction of the retail price. Go online and search 'Police stolen goods auction' to find one, or some forces have eBay stores.

NATURE NOTES

From Louise Midgley

I noticed an inordinate number of small black beetles scuttle out of the soil while weeding today. How debonair they all looked, dressed from head to toe in shiny black patent, frantically rushing this way and that, as if late for a formal, underground function. 'Move aside, please, there's no time to spare. Is it left? is it right? We've lost all sense of direction. We'll whizz back from whence we came and get our bearings.' And in the blink of an eye, they've disappeared, only to be replaced by other smartly dressed guests suffering from the same poor sense of direction.

My garden week

I've started to give my strawberry plants a fortnightly feed of liquid fertiliser to ensure the plants give me a good crop of fruit.

Good to SHARE

We love to hear what you've been up to, so do get in touch!

Letter of the week

Thank you, Renee

Surviving a NIGHTMARE

Renee Salt – one of the last living survivors of the Holocaust, who ended up marrying one of her rescuers – shares her heartbreaking memories

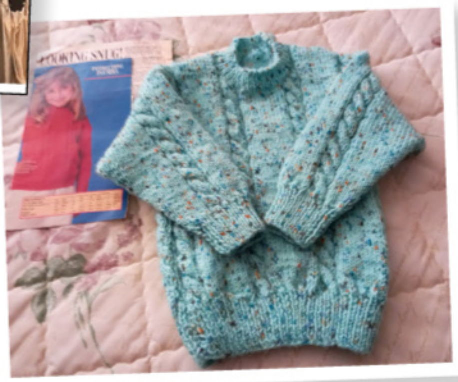
'I never believed I would come out alive'

I was moved to tears by Renee Salt's Holocaust story [14 February issue] – it's hard to believe that humans could treat other humans this way. I had an uncle who was imprisoned at Bergen-Belsen, and although I was born three years after the Second World War, my family used to talk about it. Renee Salt is a remarkable woman who has turned a dreadful time in her life into positivity, and she is quite right to be proud of the life she has built for herself. I wish her well and thank her for talking about her experiences.
Pat Burge, Isle of Wight

PAWS FOR THOUGHT

Here's Oscar the cat – checking he looks smart, ready to meet mum's friends.
Janet Down, Chessington

✱ Got a pet pic that makes you smile? We can give it a good home



LOOK WHAT I MADE

I recently completed this child's sweater, which was knitted from a *Woman's Weekly* pattern from your issue dated 24 January 1987. The pattern is in double-knit yarn and has been used by me many times since its publication. It is so versatile for boys or girls, and can be lengthened or shortened with ease, as can the arms. For many years, I've knitted mostly for charitable causes, which brings me a great deal of joy.
Christine Foley, Carmarthenshire

GET IN TOUCH

WE LOVE LETTERS
***Woman's Weekly*, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR.**
P.S. It really helps when you put your details in capitals.
✱ We do not return photos (apart from You Wore It Well) so please do not send originals.

EMAIL US
womansweeklypostbag@futurenet.com
Tell us your full name, address and daytime phone number, please.

TERRIER 'TEA LEAF'

Years ago, I was on a day out with a friend in the Lake District, when we decided it was time for a cuppa. But this Jack Russell came along and took my cup and ran off with it. We thought it was hilarious, and I have never forgotten that day!
Maureen Kirkpatrick, Longton

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What you're WEARING

Annie Chung, 55

Tell us about your look

I love this outfit as it features lilac – my new favourite shade, replacing my passion for pink. My blazer is New Look, shirt Boohoo, wide-leg jeans from Next and boots by Ikrush. I've just discovered that a beret suits me. This one is from Primark. I love colour, and I work as an image and colour consultant, posting my favourite outfits on Instagram @my_life_in_lipstick

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My smile. I love the fact that smiles are infectious and can brighten someone's day.

Jacqui Bandell, 50

Tell us about your look

I've always loved fashion and like to stay on trend. My floral-print shirt dress is a recent buy from Baukjen. It's a relaxed fit and has pockets, which I love. I've had my jacket a while but it's a classic that still works brilliantly. My trainers are Mint Velvet and my necklace came from a pearl market in Shanghai. I lived there for four years and found some wonderful jewellery.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My stamina for clothes shopping!

Ruth Banister, 56

Tell us about your look

I really enjoy watching certain TikTok influencers and feel inspired by minimalist trends – preferring plain colour and avoiding patterns, which I feel can be tiring to wear. My silver-grey coat is from M&S, the trousers are Arket, the sweater is 360 Cashmere and the boots are by The Kooples.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My wonderful hairdresser encouraged me to try just a few hair extensions around my face and the result has been thick, glossy hair – and lots of compliments.

Emily Brown, 33

Tell us about your look

I'm a jazz singer and a mum, so I'm either dressed up in sequinned gowns and heels or throwing on something practical for the school run! I want to feel good in whatever I wear, so I often go for vibrant colours that lift your mood. This jersey dress from Tu at Sainsbury's was a great buy and is so comfy. I've added a belt from New Look, boots from Office and an Accessorize bag.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

I'm proud of my teeth.

YOU WORE IT WELL

Georgie Talbot, 1964, sent in by her daughter, Lizzie Talbot

I love this photo of my dad and mum, Mike and Georgie Talbot, taken on their wedding day. Mum made her own knee-length wedding dress from white/gold brocade. She also made her headdress, and the outfit was finished off with satin kitten heels and net gloves. I think she looks fabulous. At 84, Mum still sews (currently patchwork quilts) and knits. She never stops!

✱ We'd love to see how great you looked in any era up to and including the 1980s. Please send a good-quality photo with your name, address and daytime phone number clearly written on the back, to: Fashion Dept, *Woman's Weekly*, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR. Photos will be returned.

'I've always wanted to be an actor'

TV star Ben Fogle reveals how his marriage gets even better with age, and why he'd love to act in a film

With his wife Marina (top); Marina with their children Ludovic and Iona (inset)

He's one of Britain's best-loved nature enthusiasts, and with a career spanning over two decades, it's fair to say Ben Fogle knows a thing or two about the great outdoors. The TV star shot to fame presenting an array of shows, such as *Countryfile*, *Animal Park* and *Extreme Dreams*. Yet the adventurer is embarking on a new challenge: going on tour across the country this May and June, where he will recall some of his most hair-raising encounters to date.

Although, he is showing zero signs of taking his foot off the pedal when it comes to life on the wild side, revealing, 'Naturally, the whole family gets a bit nervous about some of the places I go to, but they have trust in me.

'I run ideas past them and hear their thoughts before I agree to do anything,' says the 49-year-old – whose past pursuits include trekking in the Peruvian jungle. Moreover, they say love what you do and the rest will follow, and that clearly was the case for Ben who met his future wife, Marina, while walking his dog in London's Hyde Park.

The couple tied the knot in a Portuguese ceremony in 2006 and are now proud parents to son Ludovic, 13, and daughter, Iona, 12.

And with more and more celebrity couples renewing their wedding vows of late, Ben reveals he hopes to follow suit. 'I would love to do that,' he gushes. 'There is something really quite romantic about it. I'd be in tears – God, I get emotional talking about it.

'I don't think Marina would share my thoughts on it – she would probably laugh if I suggested it. She has Austrian blood, so I guess she's quite practical. She'd likely say, "We're already married – why do we need to do it again?"' he says. Rather than returning to Portugal where they first said 'I do', Ben suggests their second trip down the aisle would be a lot closer to home.

'I'm starting to feel my age a little bit, but age is just a number'

'I think we'd probably do it somewhere in the UK. I love this country, so I think we'd have to do it on the banks of the Thames near Oxfordshire, where we live,' he explains.

The couple tragically lost their son Willem in 2014, when he was delivered stillborn at 32 weeks, and reflecting on their 17-year marriage, Ben continues, 'Over that period you mature and change. We're like two different people and our relationship has intensified. I loved her, but you learn to really love someone even more through all the other experiences you have together,' he adds.

What's more, the broadcaster confesses he's toyed with the idea of a career change, having

Meeting Californian-desert resident Beryl for recent programme *Ben Fogle and the Lost City*

THE Woman's Weekly INTERVIEW

previously made a cameo appearance in BBC drama *Hotel Babylon*. And with acting royalty firmly instilled in his DNA – thanks to his mother, *Dad's Army* actor Julia Foster, 79 – it's unsurprising he is eyeing up a role on the big screen.

'One of the things I've always wanted to do is be an actor and follow my mother onto the stage,' he explains.

'It is my dream to be in a proper film, so if [movie director and producer] Guy Ritchie is reading this – I'd love a part,' he quips. 'I'd love to play something that goes against the stereotype, so I'd happily take an East End gangster, or a baddie of some kind – everything I'm not,' he laughs.

Furthermore, the mountaineer is set to celebrate a very special milestone when he turns 50 in November. Yet he isn't at all fazed by how many candles he'll be blowing out. 'I'm starting to feel my age a little bit, but age is just a number, so I'm not about to have some midlife crisis,' he claims. 'I also would never be held back by an age or stop doing something or dressing a certain way just because of my age,' he asserts.

Sharing the secret to his youthful looks, the age-defying dad maintains, 'I think your diet, fitness and lifestyle all contribute to how you look, feel and what you can do. I love a glass of wine or a can of beer at the end of the day to help me relax, but I can just have the one.

'I do an hour of physical exercise every day, and that's not necessarily a run or hitting the gym, but something active, like a walk with the dogs. I eat and I drink anything, but it's all in moderation,' he reasons.

*** BEN FOGLE – WILD visits 22 towns and cities in May and June. Tickets on sale now from ents24.com/uk/tour-dates/ben-fogle**

WORDS: JULIE ANN TRAINOR. PHOTOS: CHANNEL 5, INSTAGRAM@BENFOGLE, SHUTTERSTOCK

World-class HERITAGE

Discover the UNESCO World Heritage Sites right on your doorstep, here in the UK!

Did you know that the UK has more than 30 places that have an internationally recognised listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for their cultural or natural 'value to humanity'? Tourists flock from all four corners of the globe to experience the areas of natural and constructed wonder that are protected for posterity on our shores.

JODRELL BANK OBSERVATORY, CHESHIRE

A field in rural Cheshire proved to be an unlikely gateway to the universe. The astronomical marvel of Jodrell Bank Observatory with its Lovell Telescope, once the largest in the world, has been key to understanding space, from discovering meteors and black holes to exploring distant planets and all things extraterrestrial. Recognised by UNESCO for its human creative genius in 2019, the Observatory added the First Light Pavilion last year so visitors can share the deep-space experience.

✱ See jodrellbank.net

Westminster, London

Monarchy, religion and power come together in the UNESCO-recognised Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey and St Margaret's Church. The seat of government has occupied a riverside site since the 11th century, and the current Palace showcases neo-Gothic architecture at its best. Contact visitparliament@parliament.uk for tours.

Westminster Abbey has welcomed worshippers for centuries. Rebuilt by Henry III in the 13th century in the Gothic style, it has hosted 39 coronations, 16 royal weddings, and is the resting place for 30 kings and queens, statesmen, poets, musicians and the Unknown Warrior. Alongside it is St Margaret's Church, the place of worship for the House of Commons since 1614.

✱ See westminster-abbey.org for opening times.

St Kilda archipelago

A wild and desolate group of islands off Scotland's west coast, St Kilda is one of only 39 UNESCO sites in the world to have a double listing for both natural and cultural significance.

The last human inhabitants were evacuated in 1930, leaving behind well-preserved prehistoric settlements and exceptional marine, bird and animal life. Hardy visitors can see the tallest cliffs in the UK, hear thousands of seabirds, and learn about St Kilda's wonders at the museum on its largest island, Hirta.

✱ Day trips from Harris can be booked at kildacruises.co.uk

THE SLATE LANDSCAPE OF NORTH-WEST WALES

The mountains, valleys and coast of Gwynedd, once home to a world-leading slate industry, became the UK's 33rd and newest UNESCO site after it was inscribed in 2021. At one time, 17,000 workers provided a third of the world's roofing slate. Welsh slate tiles topped London's Houses of Parliament and Copenhagen's City Hall, and in 1830, half of New York's roofs were made of Welsh slate. The quarries, pits, mills and transport systems as well as villages created for the workers are still there today.

*** Visit the free National Slate Museum for an insight into quarry life – more information at museum.wales/slate**

GIANT'S CAUSEWAY AND CAUSEWAY COAST, COUNTY ANTRIM

Myth has it that the Giant's Causeway was built by an Irish giant as stepping stones to his Scottish rival. But science revealed that intense volcanic activity 50-60 million years ago was what caused 40,000 spectacular black pillars to rise out of the sea on Northern Ireland's Antrim coast. The area was selected by UNESCO in 1986 for its exceptional natural beauty. Discover one of four accessible walking trails through the 5km site and pop into the visitor centre to find out more about this geological wonder. The centre also has audio guides and organised walking tours.

*** See nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/northern-ireland/giants-causeway**

When Peter Rabbit creator Beatrix Potter died in 1943, she left her 14 farms and 4,000 acres at Ambleside to the National Trust.

The Lake District, Cumbria

The stunning natural backdrop of mountains, valleys, lakes, stone-walled fields and rugged farm buildings are key to the Cumbrian Lake District receiving its UNESCO cultural landscape listing in 2017. More than 24 million visitors a year agree. Walkers can enjoy exploring the 48 accessible routes while water lovers can go kayaking, paddleboarding, sailing or cruising at one of 16 lakes. Those preferring a cultural break can visit one of the many museums and art galleries, or pop into the former homes of writers and poets, including Beatrix Potter, William Wordsworth and John Ruskin.

*** See visitlakedistrict.com**

WORDS: CAROLINE BEDDOW. PHOTOS: ALAMY, AMGUEDDFA CYMRU, GETTY, ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF WALES

Get younger looking skin

Help it age well with these simple and affordable lifestyle tweaks and tips

AND BREATHE!

People who practised meditation for five years or more are apparently 12 years younger physiologically than their actual age*.

Here's the obvious truth – your skin *will* age as the years pass. But the good news? You can help it age well. 'Good skin isn't just about beauty, it's also about health,' says women's health expert Dr Catherine Hood. 'Our skin has an enormously important function for our bodies so it's important that we look after it.'

Doing that isn't just about lotions and potions. It's about what we eat and our lifestyle choices, such as whether we smoke or drink, and how we protect our skin from the sun.

TOP SKIN AGERS

✱ **SMOKING** This ages your skin in several ways. Chemicals in tobacco restrict blood circulation, meaning your skin gets less oxygen and fewer nutrients. It also drains water from your skin's layers and damages collagen production, which your skin needs for a youthful appearance. Plus, sucking on a cigarette causes lines and wrinkles around the mouth and eyes.

✱ **THE SUN** UV light damages skin cells, causing premature ageing and raising your risk of skin cancer. 'It damages your skin's collagen and elastin, which helps skin look young and elastic, causing sagging and collapse,' says GP Dr Hilary Jones. Use a sunscreen that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. 'UVA are the longer-wavelength rays associated with skin ageing,' says Dr Jones. Choose an SPF of at least 30 and apply regularly.

✱ **ALCOHOL** It reduces the absorption of health-boosting vitamins and nutrients, plus dehydrates skin, leading to sallowness and deeper wrinkles. Red wine, in particular, makes skin conditions such as rosacea worse. Try to avoid alcohol midweek and alternate with glasses of water to reduce your intake.

Health basics

Getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and dealing with stress are key to younger-looking skin. Our skin regenerates during sleep so make sure you get seven to eight hours a night – try a silk pillowcase to avoid creases from regularly sleeping with one side pressed against a harsh pillow.

Moving your body regularly reduces inflammation and boosts circulation to give you a youthful glow, while unchecked stress plays havoc with your complexion. Stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol affect blood flow, causing rashes and dullness, weakening your immune system, and making you more vulnerable to infection and skin problems such as hives.

MORE SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Older men and women who have regular orgasms look between five and seven years younger than their actual age.**

Getting older

An ageing body is often less resilient and able to defend itself from harm, and that's particularly true when it comes to sun damage. 'UV rays are particularly damaging during and after menopause because of changes to hormones around this time,' says Dr Jones. 'Overexposure to the sun causes skin ageing, and may be responsible for up to 80% of the causes of visible ageing – the other 20% caused by genetics and the effects of things like smoking and alcohol consumption.' So sun protection is essential, particularly now in spring, when our bodies are emerging from winter and haven't had sun exposure to help acclimatise our skin.

3 GREAT BUYS

HADA LABO TOKYO
REPAIR NIGHT CREAM

✱ **Anti-redness serum** Designed to disguise a ruddy complexion caused by skin problems such as rosacea and keratosis pilaris, as well as general ageing and uneven skin tone.

TRY TO... WEAR SPF ON YOUR FACE YEAR-ROUND

✱ **Hyaluronic acid** An anti-ager found in skincare products that helps hydrate and plump older skin. 'This molecule is a really important part of the skin structure,' says Dr Hood. 'It holds a huge amount of water in our skin, making it less prone to lines and cracking.' **Try: Hada Labo Tokyo Repair Night Cream, £21.99 for 50ml, Superdrug**, which includes four different types of hyaluronic acid for intense moisturisation.

Try: Rosalique 3 in 1 Anti-Redness Miracle Formula, £29.99 for 30ml, rosalique.co.uk, to neutralise redness.

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SPF 50
UVA UVB PROTECTION

✱ **Face sunscreen** Protecting your face from the ageing effects of the sun is crucial, particularly as you get older and your skin becomes more prone to damage. **Try: SOS SPF 50 Sun Cream, £16 for 50ml, Superdrug**, which contains active plant stem cells and antioxidants to help fight photo-ageing and radical-induced damage.

FIVE FOODS FOR A GLOWING COMPLEXION

'Eating a diet rich in skin-essential nutrients will nourish your skin,' says nutritionist Kim Pearson. Try:

1 WALNUTS

A vegan source of omega-3, this type of fatty acid can help reduce inflammation, boost hydration and prevent breakouts. Dry skin is often due to a lack of omega 3. **TIP** Soak overnight to release the nut's phytic acid, which can interfere with the absorption of nutrients and irritate digestion.

2 BERRIES

Rich in antioxidants, berries help to combat free-radical damage and slow down premature ageing. **TIP** Choose rich-coloured berries (dark red, purple or black), as they contain the highest level of antioxidants for optimum skin health.

3 TOMATOES

These contain lycopene – an antioxidant that has been shown to protect skin from sun damage. **TIP** Some foods are more beneficial eaten raw, but the lycopene in tomatoes is only released with heat, so use more tomatoes in your cooking to reap the benefits.

4 LEMONS

Lemons and other citrus foods are a good source of vitamin C, essential for collagen production. **TIP** The acid in lemon juice helps to break down food, so squeeze over meals to aid digestion.

5 GREENS

Spinach and other dark green leafy vegetables are rich in skin-healthy nutrients, especially beta-carotene. This powerful antioxidant converts to vitamin A, vital for healthy skin cell turnover. **TIP** Add raw spinach to smoothies or juices to retain and absorb the maximum amount of nutrients.

WORDS: TANYA PEAREY. PHOTOS (MAIN POSED BY MODEL): GETTY. *STUDY IN THE *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NEUROSCIENCE*. ** RESEARCH BY DR DAVID WEEKS, FORMER HEAD OF OLD AGE PSYCHOLOGY AT THE ROYAL EDINBURGH HOSPITAL. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP

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IT'S A FUNNY OLD WORLD

'John hasn't asked for weight-loss tips – yet!'

THIS WEEK'S COLUMNIST TV chef Gregg Wallace

I've had some embarrassing moments on my fitness journey. Once, I was at the gym getting changed for a class and noticed there was a stain on my T-shirt. I assumed my flask has leaked, so I just put it on. As I started to sweat and get hot in the class, a terrible smell of cat urine started emanating from me. It wasn't water, after all. I noticed the people next to me were moving further and further away – it was absolutely horrendous!

Also, I work out with my trainer regularly and stupidly take it for granted that people in the gym know me. Once I said, in jest, to one of the trainers I knew, 'Could you get out the way, please? Have you any idea who I am?' And the trainer's North American client gave me an angry look and said, 'No, I don't know who you are!' The joke didn't work that time!

Since 2017, I have lost nearly five stone – at my heaviest, I was 16st 7lb. During the pandemic I was being asked constantly by people how I did it. So I sat down with a pen, highlighters and paper, and figured out what I'd done, what I'd struggled with, what obstacles I'd had to overcome, how I sustained it. I just thought, 'How can I translate that to people?' Last year, I set up a subscription website, ShowMe.Fit, with my wife, Anna, to help people lose weight.

What I learnt is that losing weight is not about being hungry; it's about filling yourself up with food that won't make you fat. That's the secret. For breakfast, instead of a full English I now have a big pot of low-fat yogurt with a handful of oats and maple syrup. That's almost half a kilo of food for about 400 calories. A croissant can have that many calories, but it only weighs about 80 grams and it won't fill you up. You'll be hungry and discouraged, and you'll snack.

'People were moving further away'

I learnt that planning meals was important. Before, food would happen to me – lunch on the hoof was something like fish and chips or burger and chips and a chocolate bar. Now it's turkey breast koftas in pitta bread. At the *MasterChef* studios, there's always yogurt in my fridge, and Ryvita and tinned fish and salad for lunch. I eat three big meals a day. I don't crave fish and chips now, and I don't snack.

I've had such success stories, which gives me a buzz. We have a nutritionist on board, Anna films the cooking segments and we've just gained a new academic partner at Loughborough University, who'll be sharing weight-loss research with us.

I feel fit and healthy, and my weight loss is sustainable, although John Torode jokes that I take things to extremes. He said, 'You took gluttony to the extreme, and now you're taking this healthy living to another.' He hasn't asked me for any weight-loss tips – yet!

*** Subscription to Gregg's weight-loss site, ShowMe.Fit, costs £7 a month – see showme.fit**

'My funny old week'

WHERE I'VE BEEN I was in Cardiff for the rugby – I'm a huge rugby fan – then in Newcastle, London and Glasgow for work. I took the sleeper train; big mistake. Turbulence on a train!

WHO I'VE MET My son, Tom, because we watch the rugby together. And John Torode, because we've been filming *MasterChef*. I'm very fortunate to be able to call him a friend.

WHAT I'VE BOUGHT Bluetooth earphones. Sometimes I train remotely with my trainer, Danny, and the old earphones would suddenly switch me over to the theme tune from *Moana*, which I'd watched the night before with my son, Sid [who is soon to turn four].

WHAT I'VE SEEN The [2011 film] *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. I'd finished reading that trilogy of books, and I wanted to watch the movie to see if how they found the killer was credible. It wasn't.

WORDS: VICKI POWER. PHOTOS: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

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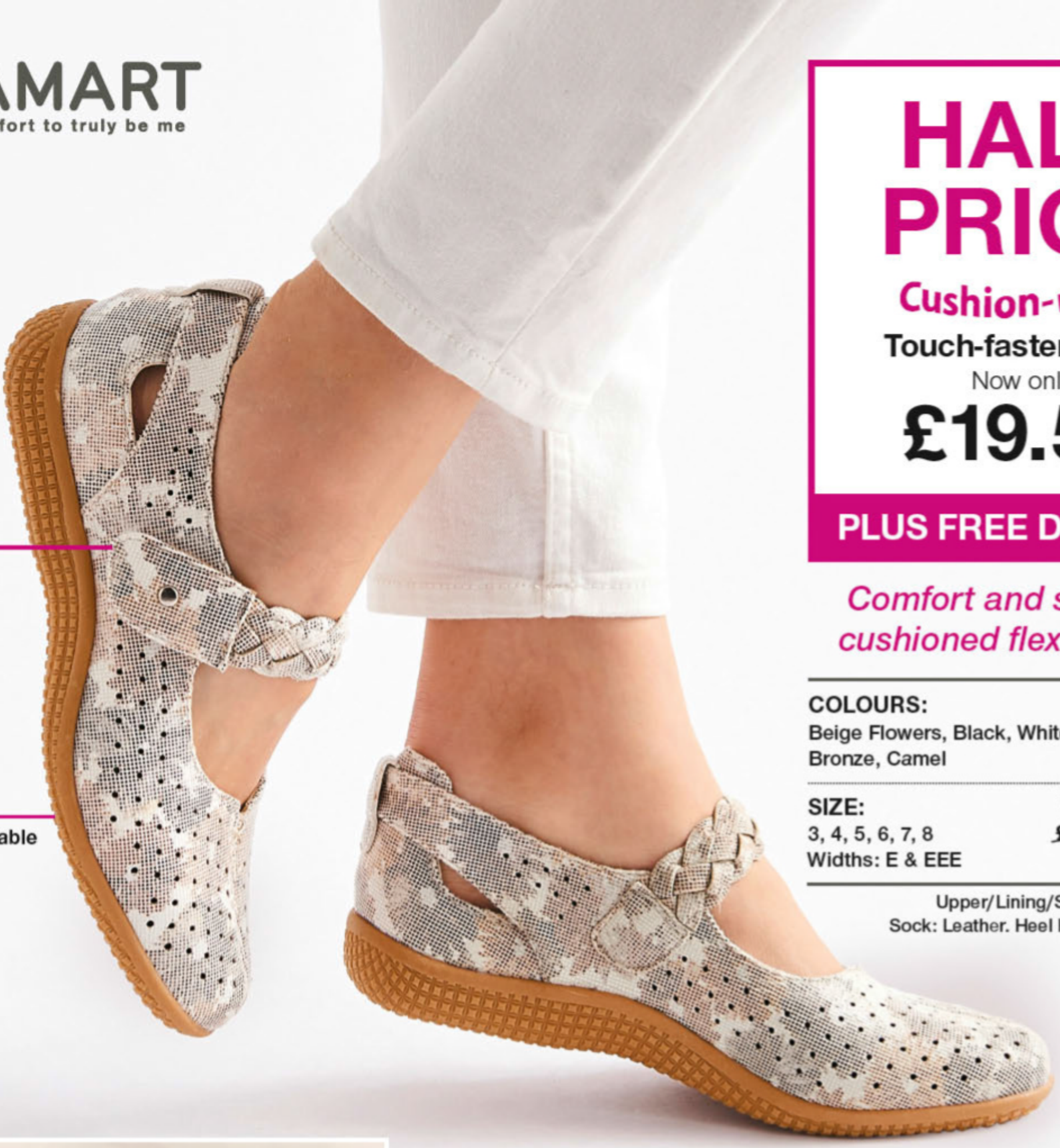

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Aisle STYLE

Update your wardrobe with these bargain buys

1

SIMPLY THE ZEST

A beautiful colour-pop dress will also see you through the summer months. Dress, £30, sizes 8-24, TU Clothing

2

THE RIGHT STRIPES

A green stripe adds a refreshing twist to nautical-inspired knits. Jumper, £19.50, sizes 6-22, F&F Clothing

3

ACT NATURAL

This timeless skirt can be dressed up or down for a variety of occasions. Skirt, £15, sizes 6-24, George at Asda

4

BAGS OF STYLE

This luxe-looking bucket bag is roomy enough for all your essentials. Bag, £16, George at Asda

5

PASTEL PERFECTION

Light layers are still necessary but pretty pastel shades keep things springlike. Jumper, £20, sizes 8-22, Nutmeg at Morrisons

6

TRUE BLUE

A chambray shirt is a wardrobe staple. It can be worn buttoned-up or open over a T-shirt. Shirt, £16, sizes 8-24, George at Asda

7

SOLE MATES

The perfect transitional shoe – simply slip on and go! Shoes, £16, TU Clothing

8

DENIM DELIGHT

F&F's jeans are now made with 100% organic or more sustainably farmed cotton. Jeans, £22.50, sizes 6-22, F&F Clothing

COMPILED BY: ELOISA JOHNSON

EXPERT-APPROVED BEAUTY

Happy FEET

Put a spring in your step with these DIY pedicure buys

Soak & soften

Take some time to relax by soaking your feet to soften rough skin on your soles and heels. Either in the bath or a bowl of warm water, sprinkle in a generous handful of **Westlab Cleanse & Refresh Pink Grapefruit Bath Salts, £7.50, Holland & Barrett**, and mix until fully dissolved. Before popping in your feet to soak, drizzle in some **Soothing Foot Bath, £3.49, Boots**, which is packed with antiseptic witch hazel, plus mint and calendula, to refresh. Leave feet to soften for no more than 20 minutes while the powerful ingredients in the water will work hard to sterilise, soothe and refresh tired feet.

Boots
SOOTHING FOOT BATH
with mint, witch hazel and calendula
Westlab
CLEANSE & REFRESH
100% NATURAL Bath Salts
PINK GRAPEFRUIT LEMONGRASS & SEAWEED

Buff & file

Dry feet thoroughly, then buff away all the dead skin on your heels. Use **Starskin VIP Fab Foot File, £7, lookfantastic.com**, and work it on the soles to help smooth cracked heels and remove any excess rough skin. The file's curved shape will help get to hard-to-reach areas – don't forget the underside of your toes. Then to get rid of any final flakes, massage in some **Ragdale Hall Foot Therapy Exfoliating Foot Scrub, £7.50, M&S**, from your knees down to your feet before rinsing. The scrub is infused with lavender and peppermint, which not only smells lovely but is also antibacterial.

STARSKIN VIP
FAB FOOT FILE

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INTENSIVE FOOT THERAPY

Nourish & soften

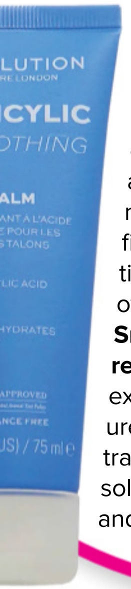
Once you have silky-smooth soles, now's the time to nourish and soften them. Massage some **Palmer's Coconut Foot Oil, £5.99, Sephora**, into lower legs, feet and soles. The fast-absorbing formula keeps feet moisturised and ready for sandal season. Follow with a generous helping of **Ameliorate Intensive Foot Therapy, £16, amazon.co.uk**, which keeps the stubborn areas of hard skin on your feet soft and smooth. Use as often as necessary – we say treat your feet like your face and apply a foot cream daily to keep dry skin at bay.

Polish & paint

Nothing gives feet a new lease of life like a gorgeous shade of polish. After cutting and filing nails to your desired length and shape, pop on some colour. If you want to invest in a lovely spring shade, then **Nailberry Nail Polish in Kindness, £15, lookfantastic.com**, will impress. The stunning pink hue promises to complement every skin tone. Don't forget a top coat to ensure that your varnish doesn't fade or chip. **CND Vinylux Long Wear Top Coat, £11.95, lookfantastic.com**, will keep your toes looking salon-worthy for weeks – it prevents scratching, chipping, dulling or denting and is worth investing in. Plus, after a few uses of both the colour and top coat, you've saved on getting just one salon pedicure!

CND
VINYLUX
LONG WEAR TOP COAT
NAILBERRY
Paris - London
L'OXYGÉNÉ

Exfoliate & treat



It's important to maintain the hygiene of your feet as well as getting them looking sandal-ready. **Australian Bodycare Nail Repair, £9.99, lookfantastic.com**, is a pharmaceutical-grade tea tree oil, which improves the appearance of cracked and discoloured nails. Brush the oil onto your nails to fight off any infections. At night, repair tired soles by using a hard-working overnight treatment. **Revolution Salicylic Smoothing Heel & Foot Balm, £6, revolutionbeauty.com**, contains exfoliating salicylic acid and softening urea, so when left overnight it will transform your feet. Smother your soles in the rich balm before bed and pop on some socks to let it work its magic.

bloom & blossom
SPRITZY TOES
Revitalising leg & foot spray

FOOT PAMPERING SOCK PACK
COCONUT OIL

Easy extras

Maintain your hard work for as long as possible. Keep feet and lower legs feeling fresh with the help of **Bloom & Blossom Spritzy Toes Revitalising Leg & Foot Spray, £24, M&S**. It revitalises tired feet and legs by alleviating water retention and stimulating circulation. If you need an easy fix before a big event or holiday, then a **Coconut Oil Pampering Foot Mask, £1.99, Superdrug**, will do all the hard work for you. Apply around 10 days before the event and leave on to exfoliate for 20 minutes. For the next few days, dead skin will shed from your feet to reveal smooth soles, ready for sandal weather!

WORDS: RHIANNON DERBYSHIRE. PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY

Teas, cakes and SELF-ESTEEM

Inspired by her daughter, one woman made it her mission to support adults with learning disabilities

Carole Goulding had a long-held dream of opening a tea room staffed by learning-disabled adults, and now that it's a reality, the venue is helping dozens of people grow in confidence and self-esteem – including her own daughter.

Carole, 61, was inspired to open a tea room in Friskney, Lincolnshire, to give her 39-year-old daughter, Samantha, and other learning-disabled adults somewhere to develop life skills, gain a sense of purpose and find the confidence to join the workforce. She is thrilled with the opportunities it's bringing the group, who include deaf and blind adults, and others with Down's syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy.

> 'Seeing how each individual changes is amazing'

'Opening the cafe was something I've thought about for a long time,' says Carole, who was a special needs teacher for 25 years, before starting her own bakery, Grandma's Pudding Co, in 2017. 'Seeing how each individual changes is amazing. They come in with no confidence, no self-esteem, they don't feel like they're worthy, as before they've almost been treated as second-class citizens. But it's really taken off. We started with two learning-disabled adults and now there are 38. Five have left to go into full-time work, which I didn't expect. The social skills they're gaining from the experience are wonderful, and they're connecting with each other.'

The idea to open GPC Specialist Tea Room was sparked 26 years ago, when Carole visited a similar cafe during a holiday in Kent. 'The owner's daughter had Down's syndrome, and they said that after she left school, it was like she dropped off the edge,' Carole recalls. 'She was able to do certain things and didn't need lots of support, but was just left, so they came up with their cafe. I always had the idea in the back of my mind that it would be a wonderful thing for me to do one day.'

Life for Carole and Samantha has been full of challenges since Samantha was born. Her body shut down twice when she was five months old due to a kidney infection, caused by other internal issues. These were repaired through surgery when she was two years old.

'I knew there was something else wrong, as she was very delayed, but doctors said it was because she'd been in and out of hospital so much,' Carole remembers. 'When she was four, I was told to put her into a home as she wouldn't amount to anything. As a young mum, that was terrible to hear. I didn't have a clue, but I saw something different in Samantha and I started to battle for her.'

Samantha has

Date + Walnut
Lemon + Lime
Coffee + Walnut Buttercream Centre
Gooseberry
New! Strawberries + Cream
FOOD HYGIENE RATING
5
SONGMICS
Grandma's Puddin
The dedicated traditional pudding and tea bread pu

Left: Samantha running the cake stall. Below: Produce grown by the assistants

WORDS: KATE CHAPMAN

Tea room with a difference
CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
This is awarded to
Samantha Goulding
For completing regular hygiene practices Part 1 at the GPC Specialist tearoom C.I.C
CAROLE GOULDING
Director

Samantha shows off her food hygiene certificate with mum Carole

spina bifida occulta, speech problems, dyspraxia, dyslexia and is on the autism spectrum, but completed her education in mainstream schools and college. Carole wanted Samantha to understand the good and bad in people, and credits the process with making her the person she is today.

Carole's own experience led her to become a special-needs teacher. But a series of life-changing events, including the sudden death of her father in 2016, being forced to give up teaching due to her health and her husband Mark developing post-traumatic stress disorder and vascular atrophy – led her to reassess things.

> 'The support has blown me away'

'My mum suggested I get back into baking, which was a favourite hobby, and turn it into a business,' Carole explains. 'I started my own bakery, specialising in tea loaves and puddings, attending markets and shows. Mum told me that life is too short, that I should follow my other dream and open the cafe. She bought me a mobile unit in October 2018 for Christmas, but we couldn't get it delivered until the following March and, sadly, she died before she could see it in situ.'

After more setbacks, including problems with builders, the cafe opened in spring 2021. 'It was scary at times. I decided not to go down the route of grants and funding in case things went wrong. I didn't want to have borrowed, or taken anyone's money, if there were going to be issues,' says Carole. 'We're a Community Interest Company – we make a little bit of money on the food, which allows us to keep the tea room running. We're all volunteers. Our purpose is about the assistants being able to understand work, how to run things for themselves, making their own mistakes, and coping with stressful situations. The tea room pays for itself, customer donations help us develop and everything we have is upcycled.'

The cafe sells snacks, cakes, drinks and main meals using traditional, locally grown produce wherever possible, and draws customers from all over the country. It has a five-star rating from East Lindsey District Council and, last year, won its first award, a citation in the best newcomer category of a county-wide food and hospitality awards scheme. The tea room has expanded with a second mobile unit and new veranda linking both, and Carole has plans to attend outside events to showcase the team's work.

'It's amazing that it's 26 years since I first saw the idea. Sadly, people are still having the same battles as I was back then,' Carole sighs.

'But we're making changes here in our little corner of Lincolnshire. My aim now is to focus on learning-disabled people in the workplace – show off their skills and continue to advance what they're doing. People feel confident coming here, we've got a really nice atmosphere and our assistants are very accepting.

'I never thought we'd be here; we've overcome a few tragedies and the community's support has really blown me away. And Samantha absolutely loves it. She was given the opportunity to work one or two days but wants to be here every day. It has really improved her social skills and, for me, that's what it's all about.'

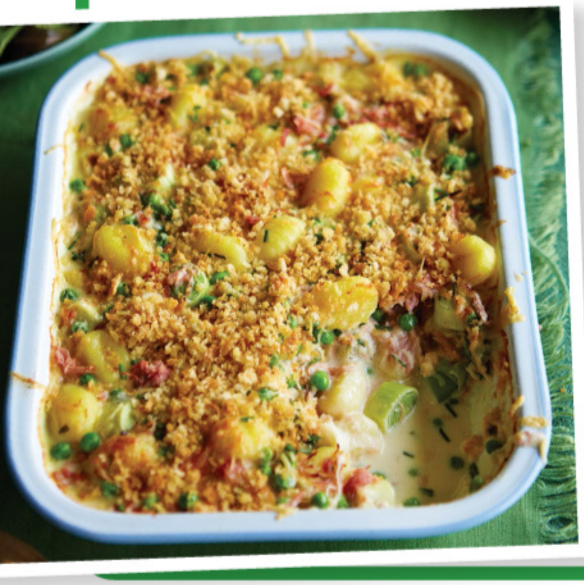
✱ For more information, search Grandma's Pudding Co on Facebook.

ONE-DISH entertaining

Impress your guests the easy way with these fuss-free recipes

Cheesy ham and leek gnocchi

Crisp on the outside and scrumptiously gooey and cheesy on the inside – a true crowd-pleaser.



PER SERVING
667 cals, 32g fat, 18g sat fat, 54g carbs

SERVES 4 PREP 10 mins
COOK 30-35 mins, plus standing

- 200ml pot half-fat creme fraiche
- 250ml milk
- 150g Gruyère, grated
- 1tsp English mustard
- 500g pack fresh gnocchi
- 150g fresh or frozen petits pois
- 180g shredded ham hock
- 4 baby leeks, thickly sliced
- 2tbsp snipped chives
- 2tbsp freshly grated Parmesan
- 25g fresh white breadcrumbs
- 1tbsp olive oil

1 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. In a large bowl, beat together the creme fraiche and milk. Stir in the Gruyère, mustard and a little seasoning.

2 Add the gnocchi, peas, ham, leeks and chives, and stir gently until evenly mixed. Tip into an ovenproof dish and bake for 15 mins.

3 For the topping, stir together the Parmesan, breadcrumbs and olive oil. Scatter over the top of the gnocchi and return to the oven for a further 15-20 mins until the sauce is bubbling and the top is golden brown. Allow to stand for 5 mins before serving.

COOK'S TIP
This is a great way to use up any leftover scraps of cheese.

Roast salmon and new potatoes with salsa verde

Looking for an all-in-one meal that's stylish enough for entertaining? This gorgeous and flavourful dish could be just the thing.

SERVES 4 PREP 5 mins
COOK 30-35 mins

- 1tbsp olive oil, plus extra for brushing
- 500g baby new potatoes, larger ones halved
- 130g pitted black olives
- 200g asparagus, trimmed and halved
- 4 lemon slices
- 500g fillet of salmon
- 1tsp chilli flakes
- Watercress or other salad leaves, to serve

FOR THE SALSA VERDE

- 2 garlic cloves
- 2tsp capers, drained and rinsed
- 2tbsp parsley leaves
- 2tbsp mint leaves
- 100ml olive oil
- 1½tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 anchovies in oil, drained

COOK'S TIP
Anya potatoes are full of flavour and are great for roasting like this.

PER SERVING
700 cals, 52g fat, 8g sat fat, 26g carbs

1 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Brush a large, shallow baking tray with oil, put the potatoes on the tray, season and roast for 10 mins.

2 Meanwhile, for the salsa verde, blend all the ingredients together in a small food processor to make a fairly smooth sauce, then season to taste.

3 Stir the olives, asparagus and lemon slices into the pan of potatoes. Nestle the salmon into the centre, skin-side down. Drizzle a little oil over the salmon and sprinkle with seasoning and the chilli flakes. Roast for 20-25 mins, until the salmon is cooked through.

4 Serve the salmon with the salsa verde and watercress or other salad leaves.

COMPILED BY: ROSE FOOKS. RECIPES AND PHOTOS: FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

Aubergine and bhaji bake

Spicy and hearty, using ready-made onion bhajis makes this dish a doddle to throw together.

SERVES **2** PREP **15 mins**
COOK **45 mins**

- 4 baby aubergines, halved lengthways and the flesh scored
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 2 heaped tbsp Madras curry paste mixed with 1tbsp water
- 227g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 large onion, cut into wedges
- 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 4 onion bhajis, roughly torn
- Fresh coriander leaves, to serve
- Mango chutney and mini poppadoms, to serve

FOR THE MINTY YOGURT

- ½tbsp mint sauce
- 75g dairy-free coconut yogurt
- ½ cucumber, deseeded, peeled and diced

1 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Brush the cut side of the aubergines with the oil, then roast for 15 mins.

2 Mix the curry paste with the tomatoes and add to the tin with the onion wedges, giving everything a mix to combine. Cook for a further 20 mins, until the vegetables are just tender.

3 Stir in the chickpeas, then scatter over the onion bhajis. Cook for a further 10 mins, until the chickpeas are warmed through and the bhajis are crisp.

4 For the minty yogurt, stir together the mint sauce, coconut yogurt and diced cucumber, then season to taste.

5 Scatter the coriander over the tray bake and serve with the minty yogurt, plus mango chutney and poppadoms.

PER SERVING
756 cals, 37g fat, 6g sat fat, 67g carbs

COOK'S TIP
Scale up this recipe to cater for more guests – there's no need to increase the cooking time.

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Clever ways to BOOST YOUR MEMORY

If your brain has felt like a sieve of late, try these easy techniques

Memory can be a slippery thing. Is there anything more frustrating than forgetting what you were about to say or do? Fortunately, there are ways that you can help to improve it, from visualisation through to grouping together pieces of information.

Where's my car?

Tired of walking around car parks, pressing the button on your keys? There's a better way. Many of us drive on autopilot, but being alert while looking for a space lays a better foundation for remembering where you've parked. Next, incorporate a landmark into your memory. Many car parks are sectioned with letters or numbers that can be used, but try using other details such as a shop, a road sign or even a fence. Whatever landmark you pick, think of a bizarre associated image that will stick in your mind. That might mean picturing your car inside the shop you're parked outside of, or imagining the road sign painted across your windscreen.

Recall names

Do you recognise faces but draw a blank on a name to go with it? To start, repeat the person's name to them once they've said it. This makes sure you have the correct pronunciation, and gives you a chance to absorb it. Secondly, think of a visual association to connect with that name. If you can tie this to their appearance, even better. For example, if Jenny has blonde hair, you might think of a famous person with blonde hair, such as Jennifer Lawrence. Visual associations can also be random – maybe you knew someone with a golden retriever called Jenny.

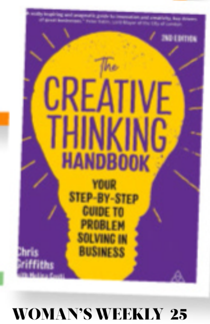
Important dates

Dates are just numbers – not very memorable! This is why 'chunking' can make it easier to keep on top of them. Our working memory can only hold a limited amount of information but, like Russian dolls, we can smuggle smaller bits of information inside bigger chunks. For example, you might group dates by seasons and bring in associated images (such as autumn leaves for a date in October). You can even introduce detailed visualisations. Some people remember key family dates by imagining they're climbing a family tree, with dates carved next to each relative and their associated branch.

General exercises

One of the best things you can do is to test your memory regularly. Before looking up the actor whose name you can't remember, have a stab at it. Research from the University of California showed that students retain information better after attempting to remember an answer and getting it wrong, than they do through revision alone. Our neurological wiring means it's easier for us to remember visual cues. Knowing this, you can strengthen your recall by regularly engaging visual associations and symbols.

✱ *The Creative Thinking Handbook* by Chris Griffiths with Caragh Medlicott and Melina Costi (£16.99, Kogan Page) is out now.


2ND EDITION
The CREATIVE THINKING HANDBOOK
YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PROBLEM SOLVING IN BUSINESS
Chris Griffiths

WORDS: CARAGH MEDLICOTT. PHOTOS: GETTY

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Your *wellbeing*

LATEST HEALTH SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR MIND AND BODY

3 WAYS TO…

Ease IBS

1 EAT SLOWLY
Avoid too many processed, fatty or spicy foods. Stick to fresh ingredients, but don't have too much fruit, which may aggravate symptoms. Try probiotics – live bacteria and yeasts in yogurts and fermented foods, such as kefir – for a month to see whether they help.

2 DRINK SMART
Too much caffeine, fizzy drinks and alcohol can irritate your gut. Have no more than three cups of tea and coffee a day. Keeping a diary of what you eat and symptoms can help identify triggers.

3 KEEP MOVING
Regular exercise can help keep your gut healthy. Stress may set off symptoms, so try massage and yoga to calm your body. If this doesn't work, consult your GP.

WORDS: TANYA PEAREY. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY
IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP

MY HEALTHY LIFE DR NAOMI POTTER

Dr Potter is a menopause doctor

My go-to remedy
A 5k parkrun is a fail-safe way to brighten up my day, while also acting as a mental reset. I love the amazing community spirit that gets all the family together – it always makes me happy.

And as a special treat, I love Aesop hand balms, which smell gorgeous and always make you feel a bit special!

My favourite meal
You can't beat a barbecue. It's always a lovely summer evening spent with my nearest and dearest – the perfect occasion to get together.

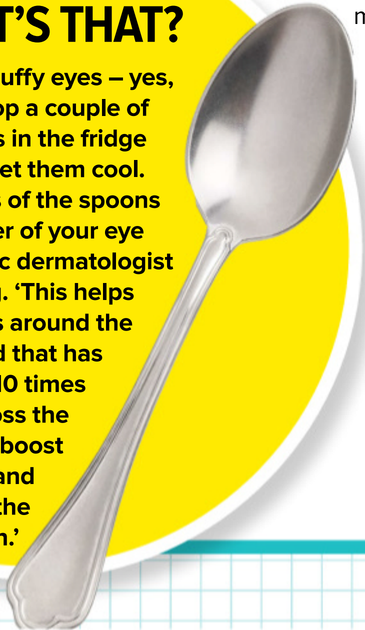
How I keep fit and healthy
I run about five times a week, which usually includes two runs around Richmond Park [one of the London Royal Parks] with friends – not only does running make me feel fitter, but it clears my mind. I've always eaten well, not only because I know it's good for me, but because it's also what I enjoy. I don't smoke and I try to drink alcohol in moderation.

My perfect day
To get up and do a parkrun, have a walk along the beach, or go for a cycle ride – anything that's outdoors and I can do with family and friends.

✱ Dr Naomi Potter is founder of the website menopausecare.co.uk

WHAT'S THAT?

It's a cure for puffy eyes – yes, really! Simply pop a couple of metal tablespoons in the fridge for 30 minutes to get them cool. 'Then glide the backs of the spoons from the inner corner of your eye outwards,' says cosmetic dermatologist Dr Catharine Denning. 'This helps relax the blood vessels around the eyes and drains fluid that has gathered. Repeat 10 times and smooth across the cheekbones to boost circulation and brighten the skin.'



Newsflash

WALK MORE TO PROTECT YOUR HEART

In older age, going an extra 500 steps a day helps cut your risk of heart attack and stroke by 14%, says a US study. Researchers found that walking a few more steps a day made a big difference in those aged 70+. Those who walked fewer than 2,000 steps a day had a 77% higher risk of serious heart problems than those who walked 4,500 steps.

Doctor Gill

ADVICE FROM OUR WOMAN'S WEEKLY DOCTOR

Coping with SARCOIDOSIS

This is a rare condition causing small patches of swollen tissue, known as granulomas

Sarcoidosis affects organs, often the lungs, lymph nodes and skin. Symptoms depend on the organ affected, but typically include tender bumps on the skin, breathing problems and persistent cough. Often symptoms aren't severe, improving without treatment within a few months.

There's no cure, but symptoms can usually be managed with medication. It's impossible to predict how sarcoidosis will affect a person, and symptoms vary widely depending which organs are involved. In acute sarcoidosis, symptoms develop suddenly but they clear within a few months. Occasionally there are no symptoms, being found coincidentally after an X-ray for other problems. However, in chronic sarcoidosis, symptoms develop gradually and worsen, eventually severely affecting health with lots of granulomas in an organ, preventing it from working properly.

In nine out of 10 patients, sarcoidosis affects the lungs – pulmonary sarcoidosis, with shortness of breath and a persistent dry cough. Some also have pain and discomfort in their chest. Skin sarcoidosis causes reddish-brown or purple, tender bumps or patches on the skin. If other organs are affected, you may have tender, swollen glands in the neck, armpits and groin, tiredness and general malaise, painful joints, red or sore eyes, abnormal heart rhythm, headaches, bone pain or kidney stones.

Sarcoidosis is an autoimmune condition where the body's immune system mistakenly attacks your own tissues, resulting in inflammation that causes granulomas to develop in the organs. The cause isn't clear, possibly an environmental factor triggers it in genetically susceptible people. It's not infectious, nor directly inherited, but can occasionally occur in

Treatments you may be offered

✱ LIFESTYLE CHANGES Treatment may not be needed, just regular monitoring. Gentle activity, good sleep and a balanced diet will all help. Painkillers (paracetamol, ibuprofen) help control flare-up pains until it settles.

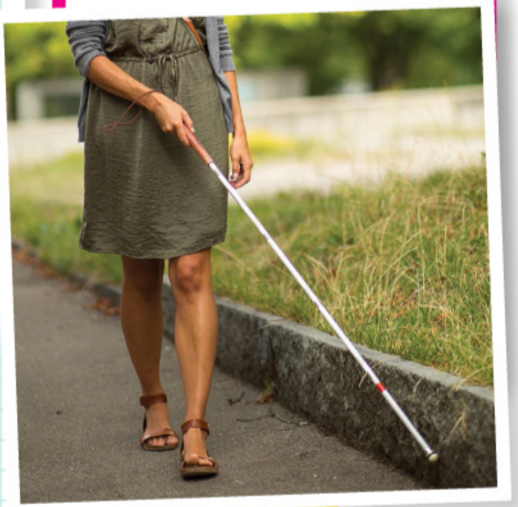
✱ MEDICATION If treatment is recommended, steroid tablets are usually used, which should help relieve symptoms and prevent damage to affected organs by reducing inflammation as well as preventing scarring.

✱ SUPPLEMENTS Short-course high-dose steroids, then low-dose steroids, often for months, risks osteoporosis, so taking calcium or vitamin D supplements can help reduce this risk.

✱ IMMUNE SUPPRESSANTS
If steroids are not enough or there are concerns about side effects, immunosuppressant medication might be recommended to reduce the activity of your immune system.

Smart walking stick

Engineers at Colorado Boulder University are developing walking sticks for the visually impaired to navigate shops or cafes. The stick handle has a camera with computer-vision technology, which maps and catalogues surroundings. AI algorithms identify room features, calculating the route to a seat, or scan shelves for products, guiding users by handle vibrations and spoken directions like 'move a bit to your left'. The researchers are trying to make the system more compact, so it can run off a smartphone on the cane.

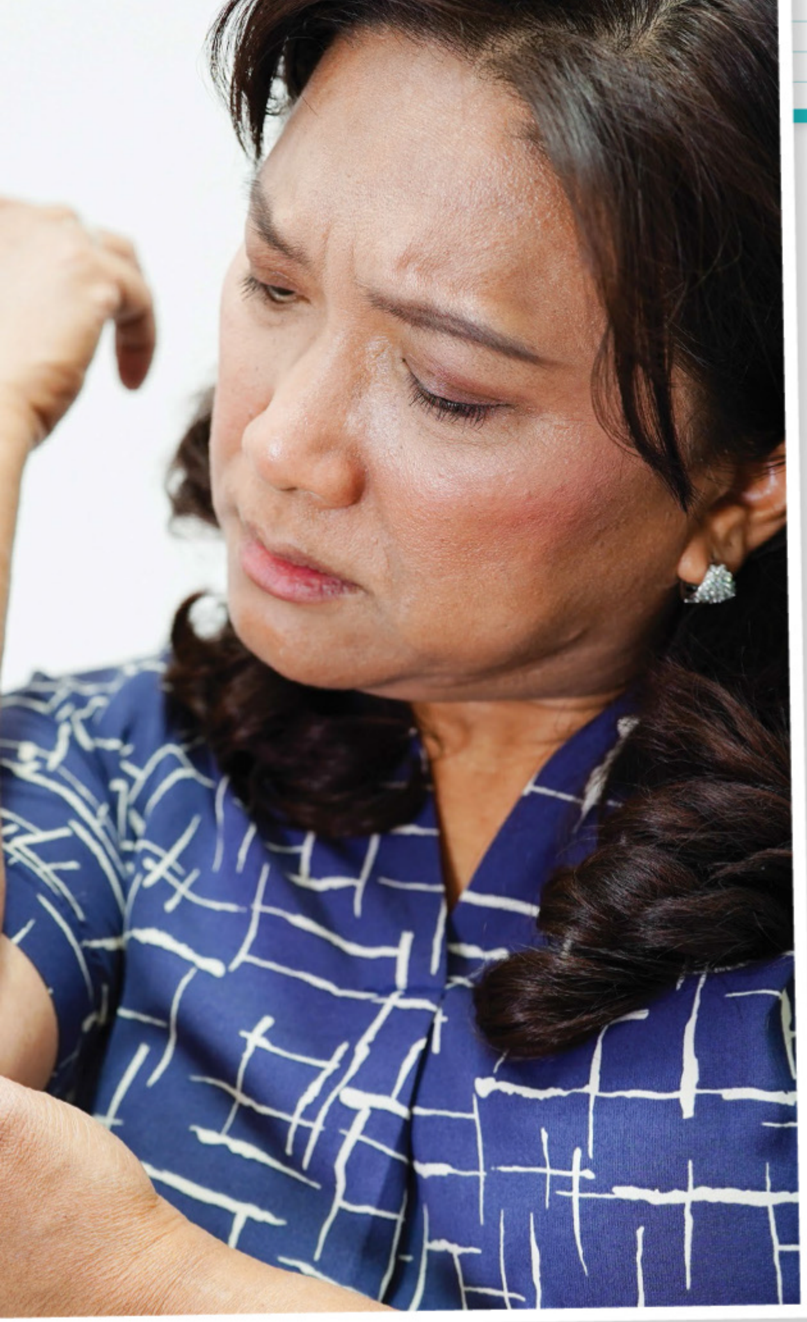


CLOSE THE LID BEFORE FLUSHING

Occasionally, research is so clear that statistical analysis isn't needed to show its significance. A study using a laser-illuminated video recording of the aerosol cloud emitted by a flushing toilet has shown that, within seconds of flushing, droplets containing urine, faeces and potentially infectious particles shoot upwards into people's breathing zones. So close the lid before flushing, and leave it down for at least 10 minutes to avoid inhaling anything harmful.

PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY.

DR GILL IS UNABLE TO OFFER INDIVIDUAL ADVICE OR SEE INDIVIDUAL PATIENTS. ADVICE GIVEN HERE IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY. SEEK HELP FROM YOUR GP IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL PROBLEM



True or false?

Vitamin C helps you absorb calcium for strong bones

True: Vitamin C assists calcium absorption, and promotes the formation of cells in charge of bone growth. Along with vitamin D, it's vital for collagen synthesis and mineralisation, and may reduce the risk of chronic diseases and some cancers, plus protect against heart disease, high blood pressure and immunity disorders. Find it in citrus fruit, tomatoes, peppers and broccoli.

4 FIXES FOR...

Boils

1 **WASH HANDS OFTEN** Ensuring that your skin is clean, healthy and clearer of bacteria reduces the risk of boils and abscesses developing.

2 **DON'T SHARE THINGS** Use separate towels and linen. Sharing clothes, shoes, razors or baths will maximise transfer of bacteria. Wash your towels, flannels, clothes and bed linen regularly.

3 **DON'T SQUEEZE PUS OUT** This spreads bacteria to other skin areas. Use tissues to gently wipe pus away from your boil. Throw them away immediately then wash your hands.

4 **COMPLETE TREATMENT COURSES** Wait until your abscess is fully treated and healed before using communal gym equipment, saunas or swimming pools.

more than one family member. Sarcoidosis can affect people of any age, but usually starts in adults aged between 30 and 40, affecting more women than men. It's rare in childhood. Diagnosis is made from the clinical picture plus tests, depending on which organs are affected. If your symptoms suggest you have pulmonary sarcoidosis, you may have a chest X-ray or lung CT scan.

Occasionally, doctors may want to examine the inside of your lungs using a thin, flexible tube with a light source and a camera at the end (bronchoscope) passed down your throat. A small biopsy of lung tissue may be removed so it can be studied under a microscope. Similarly, biopsies of other organs – such as the skin, heart or eyes – or scans or examinations of these areas will be carried out. The sarcoidosis UK website offers support at sarcoidosisuk.org

Q Is cold-water swimming or showering good for you?

A There's increasing evidence that ice baths reduce inflammation, swelling and delayed onset muscle soreness following exercise. Cold-water swimming may have similar effects, and cold showers work in a gentler way, especially after a hot workout, when the cooling may reduce cardiac stress. Other studies suggest ice massage to the head and spine may reduce blood pressure and heart rate, but more research is needed. With falling temperature, the body increases circulatory blood flow, warming your core, protecting vital organs. Cold showers possibly boost your metabolism, burning more calories, even helping control blood sugar, and may help depression by decreasing cortisol and increasing endorphins. Research also suggests cold water can improve immune responses by increasing white blood cells. At the end of your shower, change from hot to cold for 2-3 minutes, then slowly build up to colder, longer sessions.

27%
The proportion of people who have noticed loved ones become more isolated as a result of untreated hearing loss*.

Time to LISTEN UP

As *Loose Women*'s Kaye Adams found, a free hearing test at Boots can be life-changing

Do people say you've got the TV on too loud? Are you always asking others to repeat themselves? You could be among the one in 10 Brits who suspect they have hearing loss but haven't done a test*. Until recently, this included Kaye Adams, 60. But when her work and social life began to suffer, she realised there was a very simple solution.

Why do you think you put off getting your hearing checked?
I didn't want what I already knew to be confirmed. I kept telling myself that I was just a bit blocked up after a bad cold, or that my hearing was no worse than anyone else's my age. But deep down, I knew that I was avoiding the issue because I thought it might identify me as an 'older person', and I was, to my shame, uncomfortable with that.

What situations were you struggling with?
I found socialising hard, particularly in noisy restaurants or cafes. I'd have to guess what was being said and hope that I was responding appropriately. To help, I would scan other people's faces to see if a nod or shake of my head was the right reaction. It was also becoming a problem at work when I was hosting discussions at conferences or on television. Being in a taxi with a chatty driver was my worst nightmare, because I couldn't hear a word they said.

How much of a difference have your hearing aids made?
They have changed my life. I hear everything so easily now! But it also means I no longer carry the anxiety of being in situations and not following the conversation. I can relax again.

Were they hard to get used to?
Not at all – it took minutes. It was like being thrown a life jacket. I pop the hearing aids in in the morning and take them out at night.

How was your Boots Hearingcare experience?
I really appreciated the care and detail that the Boots audiologists went into. I knew exactly what was happening with my hearing and how the aids could help. Getting them fitted was totally painless. I wish I had done it years ago.

TAKE ACTION TODAY...

✱ Unfortunately, our hearing won't improve on its own.
✱ Stop missing out and get help from the experts at Boots.
✱ To book a free hearing check, visit bootshearingcare.com or call 0345 270 1600***.**

Boots Hearingcare

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*Survey by Boots Hearingcare, November 2022. **Over 18s and Hearingcare stores only. Terms and conditions apply. Subject to availability. See in store for details. ***Local call rates apply, mobiles may vary.

WORDS: JENNY ROWE

Here to help

LET COUNSELLOR KEREN LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

Gifting has got out of control

Q Over the years, my children started to buy each other and us bigger and bigger presents for birthdays and Christmas. It started when they all got good jobs and could afford it, and they were probably showing off. I now find myself struggling to keep up. My husband says it's the thought that counts.

Clare, Leeds

A It sounds like present-buying has become a bit of a competition with your children. I'm wondering why you think you need to join in. I'm sure there have been many competitions between them as they grew up that you stayed out of.

As we age, most people have less money than their working children and a need to reduce expenditure. It's time for the family to sit down and talk about this, and plan a way forward. They may have become caught in a 'game' that suited them when they first started earning, and not know how to change it. They may well welcome an opportunity to reassess.

We've downsized and I hate it

Q We've recently downsized to a flat. My husband likes it but I can't see myself here. It seems drastic but I'm considering leaving him after 33 years of marriage, as I will be unhappy if we stay where we are. I don't want to leave him as everything else is good in our relationship. How do I convince him we need to move?

Lizzie, Lincoln

A I'm wondering if you've told him how unhappy it's making you feel, and the reasons the move hasn't been right for you. It sounds like you both want different things from a home.

I'd start by having that conversation and see if you can find a solution that will meet both your needs. If you're unable to resolve this on your own, you might benefit from couples counselling. You can both share what matters to you in a home and find a way to resolve this so you can continue to be together. I'm sure he won't want this to end the marriage.

Relate is a good place to start. Visit relate.org.uk for more information.

Our relationship expert Keren Smedley has over 20 years' experience. Keren welcomes your letters, emails and texts, but she cannot reply to individual cases and will select correspondence at random for publication.

I can't let myself relax

Q I've recently retired, and find myself wandering around in the day being unsure what to do with myself. I live alone so the chores don't take long. I would love to just sit and read a book but, because it seems so decadent and lazy, I stop myself until it's the evening. My friends say it's fine, but it doesn't feel right to me.

Karen, Winchester

A I'm with your friends: reading a book in the day when you have time is lovely. I'm sure you're happy to do it when you're on holiday. It sounds like you've created a rule in your head that you're now living by. The rule may well be based on old messages about not wasting time and being productive in the working week, but things are different now, and you can do whatever you fancy. If I were you, I'd enjoy the freedom and read away.

She's not taking care of herself

Q My mother is 81 and lives on her own. She seems to manage pretty well, except I've noticed that she often smells a bit. I've asked her about washing herself and her clothes, and she says she showers daily and changes clothing. My brother lives out of town and he recently stayed a couple of nights with her and says she never showers. I don't know what to do.

Name and address withheld

A It's quite common for an elderly person to stop bathing. This may be due to depression, fatigue, fear of falling or pain. It's often a sign that things may be changing in their ability to manage without help. It may be helpful to have a chat with her to see if there's something making it hard for her, and offering to assist her either with the shower or putting in aids.

Try to normalise this for her. If she's not willing to talk to you, maybe it could be raised at a doctor's appointment. You can get some advice on how to manage this from Age UK by calling 0800 055 6112 or at ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care

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STYLE *for less*

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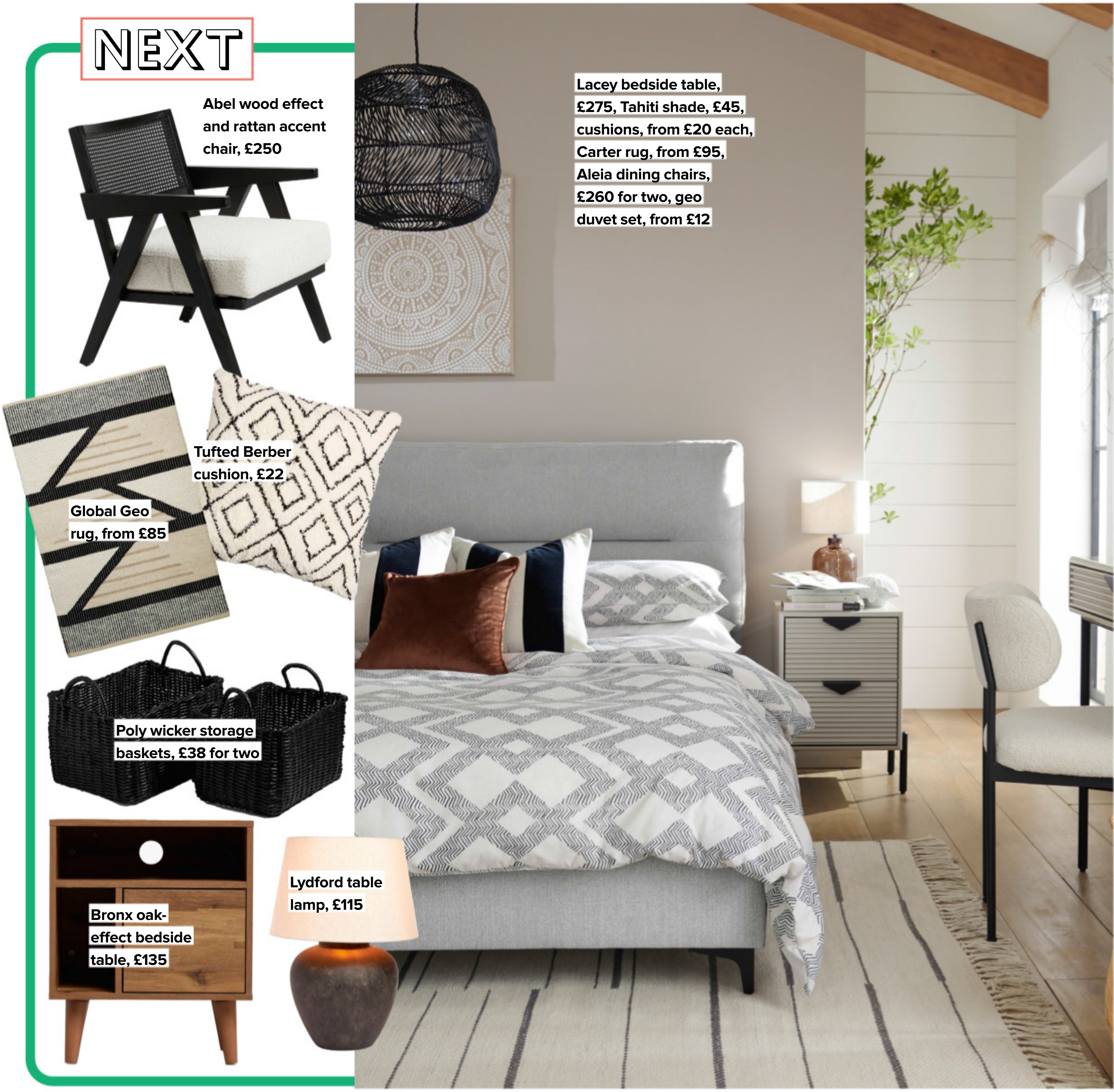
NEXT



Abel wood effect and rattan accent chair, £250

Tufted Berber cushion, £22

Global Geo rug, from £85

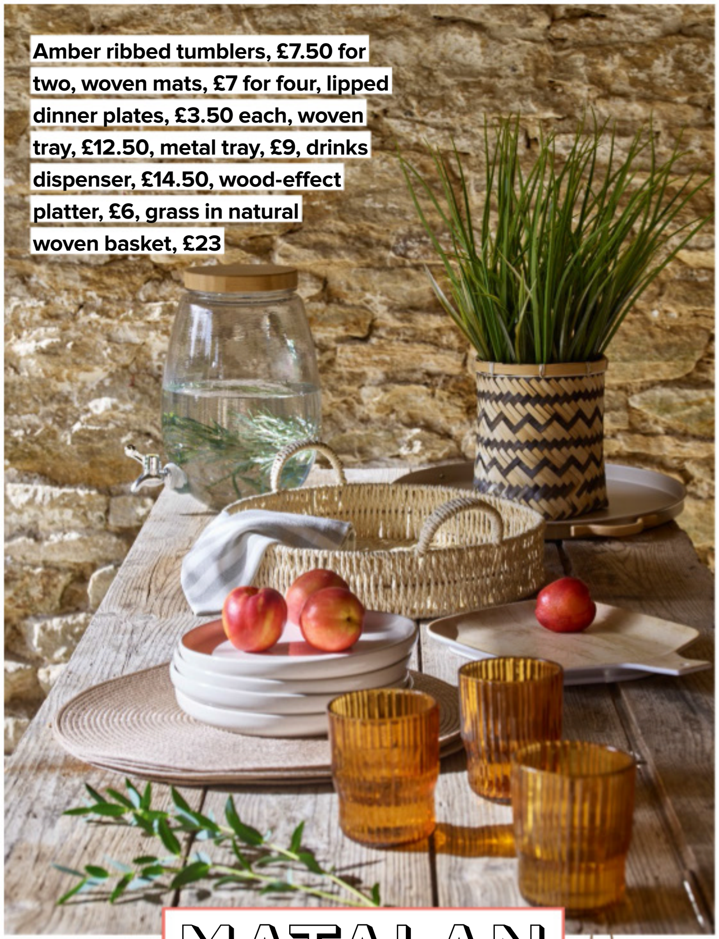
Poly wicker storage baskets, £38 for two

Bronx oak-effect bedside table, £135

Lydford table lamp, £115

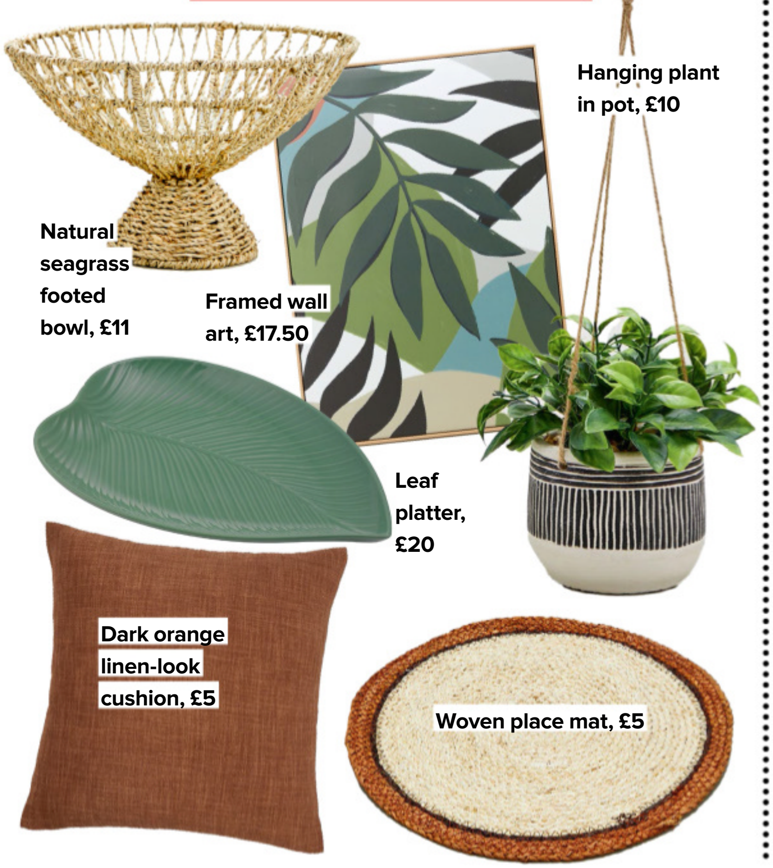
Lacey bedside table, £275, Tahiti shade, £45, cushions, from £20 each, Carter rug, from £95, Aleia dining chairs, £260 for two, geo duvet set, from £12

COMPILED BY: ESME CLEMO. PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING



Amber ribbed tumblers, £7.50 for two, woven mats, £7 for four, lipped dinner plates, £3.50 each, woven tray, £12.50, metal tray, £9, drinks dispenser, £14.50, wood-effect platter, £6, grass in natural woven basket, £23

MATALAN



Natural seagrass footed bowl, £11

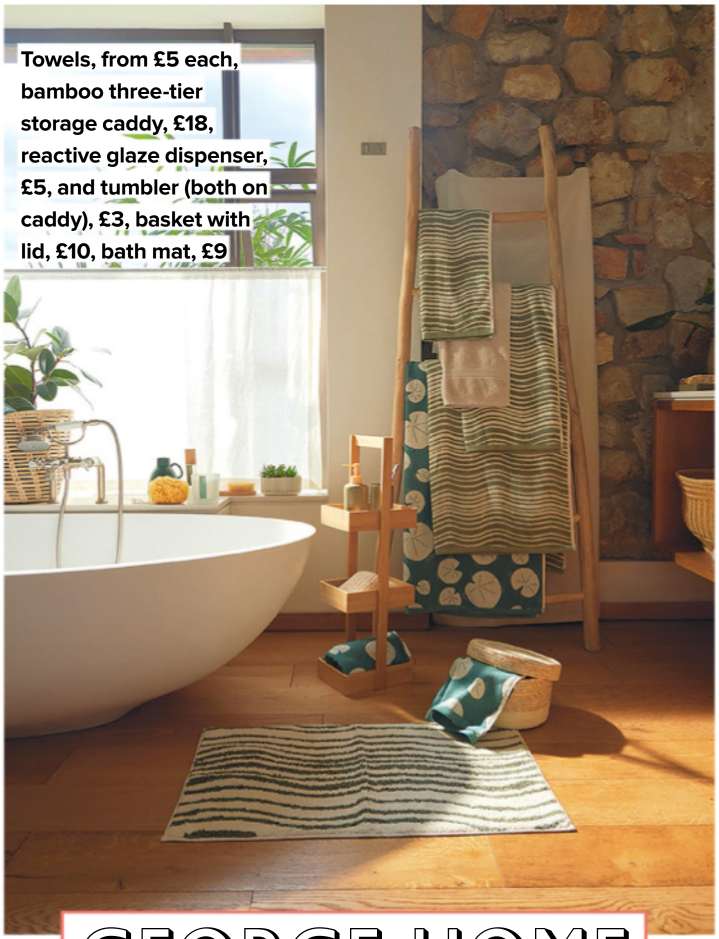
Framed wall art, £17.50

Hanging plant in pot, £10

Leaf platter, £20

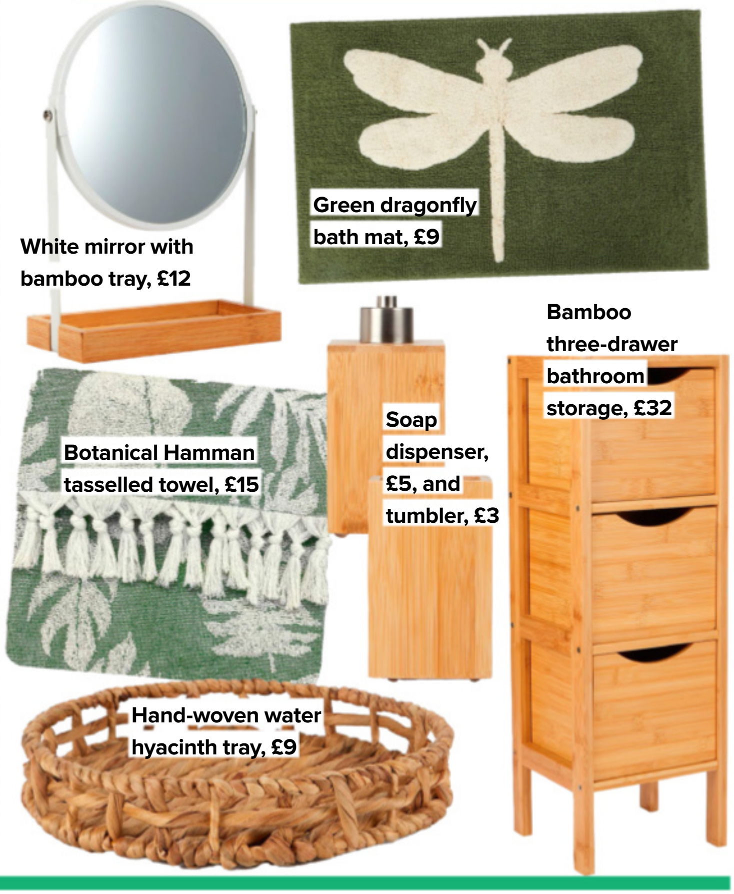
Dark orange linen-look cushion, £5

Woven place mat, £5



Towels, from £5 each, bamboo three-tier storage caddy, £18, reactive glaze dispenser, £5, and tumbler (both on caddy), £3, basket with lid, £10, bath mat, £9

GEORGE HOME



White mirror with bamboo tray, £12

Green dragonfly bath mat, £9

Botanical Hamman tasselled towel, £15

Soap dispenser, £5, and tumbler, £3

Bamboo three-drawer bathroom storage, £32

Hand-woven water hyacinth tray, £9

Best of BRITISH PUDS!

Treat loved ones to one of these irresistible classic desserts – ideal for any celebration!

Cherry Bakewell roly-poly

Almond and cherry flavours give this nostalgic treat an added comforting twist.

PER SERVING
470 cals, 16g fat, 8g sat fat, 74g carbs

SERVES 6 PREP 30 mins COOK 50 mins

- 200g self-raising flour
- 1tbsp caster sugar
- 100g vegetable suet
- 130-150ml whole milk
- 1tsp vanilla extract
- 1tsp almond extract
- 200g cherry jam
- 50g marzipan
- 500g tub custard, to serve
- Flaked almonds, toasted (optional)

YOU WILL NEED

- Large sheet of foil lined with a sheet of well-greased baking paper on top

1 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Position a large roasting tin in the bottom of the oven and set a rack just above. Fill the roasting tin with water.

2 In a large bowl, mix the flour, sugar and a pinch of salt, then lightly rub in the suet. Whisk together the milk, vanilla and almond extracts, then mix in enough of the liquid to the flour mix to form a soft dough that's not too sticky. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and roll out to a 25x35cm rectangle.

3 Spread the jam over the pastry, leaving a 2cm border, then grate over the marzipan. Roll up, starting from the short edge and pinch to seal the edges.

4 Transfer the pudding to the prepared foil/paper and roll up. Twist the ends to seal and bake on a tray, directly above the tray of water, for 50 mins.

5 Carefully unwrap the pudding and cut into slices. Serve with a drizzle of custard and a sprinkling of toasted flaked almonds, if liked.

Rhubarb and ginger cobbler

This special spiced pud is a wonderful way to savour the last of this season's rhubarb.

PER SERVING
499 cals, 16g fat, 9g sat fat, 83g carbs

SERVES 4-6 PREP 30 mins COOK 30 mins

- 800g rhubarb, cut into 3cm pieces
- 3 stem ginger balls, finely chopped, plus 2tbsp syrup from the jar
- 150g golden caster sugar
- 3tbsp cornflour
- Zest and juice ½ lemon
- 180g self-raising flour, plus extra for dusting
- 100g soft brown sugar
- 100g unsalted butter, cubed
- 80ml single cream, plus extra to serve
- 2tbsp demerara sugar, to top
- 1tbsp flaked almonds, to serve (optional)

YOU WILL NEED

- 26cm round ovenproof dish
- 4.5cm round cutter

1 Heat the oven to 200C Fan/Gas 7. Mix the rhubarb, stem ginger and syrup, caster sugar, cornflour, lemon zest and juice in the pie dish. Cover with foil and bake for 15 mins.

2 Meanwhile, make the topping. Whizz the flour, soft brown sugar, 80g butter and a pinch of salt in a food processor, pulsing until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs. Slowly pour in the cream just until the mixture comes together to form a dough.

3 Roll out the dough between 2 sheets of baking paper to 1cm thick. Using the cutter, stamp out rounds until all the dough has been used up, re-rolling if necessary.

4 Dot the remaining butter over the rhubarb, then top with the cobbler circles, overlapping if you need, leaving some gaps for any steam to escape. Sprinkle with the demerara sugar and bake for 15 mins until the top is golden.

5 If using, scatter over the almonds and return to the oven for 5 more mins. Serve in bowls and top with extra cream or ice cream, if you like.

RECIPES: JESS MEYER AND AMANDA JAMES. FOOD STYLING: JESS MEYER AND ROSE FOOKS.
PHOTOS: HANNAH TAYLOR-EDDINGTON. PROPS: DAVINA MAJI. KITCHEN BY MAGNET

Banoffee pie

The perfect balance of sweet caramel, fresh banana and softly whipped cream, plus a touch of chocolate for good measure!

SERVES 10-12
TAKES 45 mins, plus chilling

- 300g dark chocolate digestive biscuits
- 100g butter, melted
- 150g dark chocolate, roughly chopped, plus extra, grated, for the top
- 397g tin Carnation caramel
- 3 large bananas, sliced
- 300ml double cream
- 2tbsp Kahlúa or other creamy liqueur such as Baileys (optional)

YOU WILL NEED

- 20cm springform cake tin, the base lined with baking paper

1 Whizz the biscuits in a food processor to make fine crumbs. Add the melted butter and pulse until combined. Press the mixture over the tin's base and 5cm up the sides. Chill for 1 hr until completely firm.

2 Melt the chocolate in a large heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water (don't let the bowl touch the water). Remove from the heat and mix in the caramel. Spread this mixture into the biscuit case, smoothing with the back of a spoon to level. Arrange the sliced bananas on top of the caramel.

3 Whip the cream in a clean mixing bowl with the Kahlúa, if using, to soft peaks. Don't overbeat or the cream will become grainy. Gently dollop over the top of the bananas to create soft billows. Decorate with chocolate shavings and chill for 1 hr to set.

PER SERVING
500 cals, 32g fat, 19g sat fat, 50g carbs

COOK'S TIP
It's easiest to use the bottom of a glass to get a smooth finish when pressing the biscuits into the base.

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- ✓ Unique internal tie technology maintains shape throughout the night

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Actor Rula Lenska had this to say:

"It is rare that something advertised as unique and life changing turns out to be true!! I have a chronic back and neck situation and I can honestly say these pillows make a huge difference!! Comfortable…supportive…and positively magical for my neck!! Congratulations! Many, many thanks"

Harley Street Consultant and back pain specialist, Dr Deane Halfpenny, recommends Gx Pillows:

"I can honestly say that your pillow has made the world of difference… and fully endorse your pillow as being quite unique in its ability to maintain support throughout the night"

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Mr Torkington's LUNCH

She knew what she was doing was wrong – but would she get her just deserts?

I never thought I'd wear a blue polyester suit with a pussy-bow blouse. But, just out of college and desperate for a job, I took the only one on offer, as a receptionist at a large firm of solicitors.

I'd receive visitors, take messages and make clumsy attempts to arrange flowers in a tall crystal vase. It was so boring, I decided I'd stay six months, save some money, then travel.

One morning, soon after I started, a woman appeared with a Tupperware lunch box.

'It's for Mr Torkington,' she said as she passed it to me. Her wedding ring suggested she was Mrs Torkington. Her husband must have forgotten his lunch.

I spent the day in a panic

I waited for her to leave, then I opened the box. It contained two bagels filled with smoked salmon and cream cheese, a tub of avocado salad, a packet of luxury crisps and a chocolate brownie studded with macadamia nuts. A paper napkin, wooden cutlery and a carton of mango juice completed the feast.

I thought of my own lunch box and its contents – a thin, white-bread sandwich filled with orange processed cheese and a sorry-looking apple.

I picked up the phone. 'Item in reception for Mr Torkington.'

'I'll be right down,' came his secretary's reply.

Five minutes later, I heard the clatter of high heels on the marble floor. A woman who looked like she'd stepped away from a beauty counter walked over.

'Here you are,' I said as I handed her *my* lunch box.

I cringe now when I think about it – but I got away with it! Mr Torkington didn't come storming down demanding to know what was going on. I had planned to say I'd made a mistake.

I looked Mr T up on the company website. He was one of the senior partners. He had a round face and kind blue eyes – and his lunches became the highlight of my day. They were delicious!

At the end of the week, I switched the boxes as usual. At lunchtime, after I'd finished every last morsel of Mr Torkington's lunch, I noticed a piece of paper folded into a perfect square. I assumed his wife had left him a loving note. Intimate words not intended for the eyes of a 'thieving' receptionist.

I fished it out and read, *I know you've been taking his lunch.*

I spent the rest of the day in a panic, fully expecting an unpleasant confrontation with an irate Mr Torkington. Nothing happened.

On the Monday, I forced myself to go to work. It was time to face up to what I'd done. Mrs Torkington appeared at her normal time. She handed me the box. I scrutinised her face for any hint of annoyance but she looked as she always did.

I tried to follow her example and endeavoured to adopt a nonchalant poise. I rang Mr Torkington's secretary and waited.

'I've come to collect my lunch.' In the flesh, Mr Torkington looked younger.

I felt my face flush. Even my ears went red. He held out his hand to receive the lunch box... 'I'm hoping this is my usual lunch,' he smiled.

'It's the one your wife just brought in,' I replied.

'My sister, actually,' he said.

I passed it to him. Our fingers touched for a second. He lifted the lid an inch, closed it and shook his head. 'Could you swap them like you usually do?'

I gazed into his puppy-dog eyes. 'Er, yes, of course,' I mumbled.

'I'm Mark,' he smiled. 'Perhaps we could go for a drink later?'

He took me to a wine bar and ordered a bottle of dry white. He explained that his sister June owned a catering company that specialised in providing posh packed lunches for businesses. She delivered to the offices next door and dropped off a calorie-loaded lunch for her brother.

Mark told me he was onto me from day one. Only, he'd said nothing. He was trying to lose weight, but June's lunches weren't helping. His sister used him as a guinea pig to trial new lines.

Last week, his bumbled, clueless feedback had raised her suspicions. A poor liar, he confessed all. June had put the note in the lunch box as her little joke.

At Mark's suggestion, I sent June a review of the new products. It was the least I could do. I even had the cheek to make some recommendations – more pepper in the falafel and extra spice in the passion-fruit cake.

That's how I came to work for her. She'll be doing the catering when Mark and I get married next year.

THE END

Barbara Compton, 2023

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Get away to GUERNSEY

Distant enough to feel like an adventure, yet close enough for a weekend escape, this group of islands is a delight in spring

The harbour at St Peter Port

Cast out off the coast of Normandy – geographically much closer to France than England – enchanting Guernsey is a holiday classic. It offers spectacular beaches, accessible outdoor adventures and a sprinkling of history plus, day trips to the car-free (and care-free) islands of Sark and Herm. Smaller than its glitzier Channel Islands neighbour Jersey, Guernsey's laid-back atmosphere will soon have you switching to island time and embracing life like a local.

Go on safari

A Land Rover safari with Tour Guernsey (tourguernsey.com) is a fun way to tick off the island's highlights. Starting in the pretty main town of St Peter Port, you'll pass Hauteville House (maisons victorhugo.paris.fr) – the one-time home of *Les Misérables* author Victor Hugo – then head onwards to the Little Chapel, a pebble-adorned miniature version of the pilgrimage site at Lourdes in France. You'll also pause at Napoleonic fortifications and ancient Neolithic standing stones, and visit the Second World War German Occupation Museum (germanoccupationmuseum.co.uk), with its moving stories from the island's challenging period under Nazi rule.

Catch a wave

With almost 30 miles of coastline, pristine sandy bays and crystal-clear water, Guernsey is a magnet for swimmers and beach bunnies. Feeling adventurous? Try kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding and coasteering around the island's rugged rocks and caves with Outdoor Guernsey (outdoorguernsey.gg), or catch a wave at Vazon Bay with Guernsey Surf School (guernseysurfschool.co.uk). The latter offers one-to-one and group lessons for all levels. Meanwhile, Guernsey Swim Adventures (facebook.com/guernseyswimadventures) leads guided wild swims in incredible locations – though you could also take a sheltered salt water plunge into The Bathing Pools (thebathingpools.com) at La Vallette, if preferred.

Dine in style

From seaside restaurants to cosy inns, you'll find plenty of places to replenish after a day on one of Guernsey's many beautiful beaches. In St Peter Port, globe-trotting Octopus (octopusgsy.co.uk), serves street food, salads and ramen noodles overlooking Havelet Bay. Or try contemporary Mexican dishes in a funky setting at Búho Latina Cantina (buho.gg). If you're heading out on an adventure, the Guernsey Hamper Company (guernseyhampercompany.co.uk) sells hampers filled with locally produced treats, including delicious afternoon teas. You'll also find kiosks serving snacks and drinks on many of the bays, including Cobo Bay: a perfect spot for swimming and watching the sunset.

Hop over to Herm

There's more to Guernsey than just its main island. Jump on a ferry from St Peter Port to visit the car-free holiday haven of Herm, a wonderfully wild isle that is brilliant for hikes. From April to July, you

Vazon Bay is ideal for surfers

Change down a gear in car-free Sark

See Guernsey on a Land Rover safari

can look out for cute little puffins nesting on the cliffs (the aforementioned Outdoor Guernsey runs tours), though watch out for dolphins and seals too. If visiting later in the summer, kick back on Shell Beach or Belvoir Bay – two of the Channel Islands' most stunning stretches of sand – and treat yourself to a cream tea or cocktails at the White House Hotel before you catch the ferry back.

Stargaze on Sark

Another relaxing, car-free zone, the island of Sark offers a day trip back in time. Browse the craft shops of its historic main street, The Avenue, hire a bicycle, or explore the island's attractions on a guided horse-and-carriage tour with Sark Carriages (sarkcarriages.co.uk). Afterwards, La Seigneurie Gardens (laseigneuriedesercq.uk) has a historic fairy-tale 'castle' and woodland walks, while secluded wild-swimming spot, the Venus Pool, is a magical place for a dip. Sark was the world's first Dark Sky island and, on a clear night, Dachinger Observatory (sastros.sark.gg) showcases the dazzling stars of the Milky Way for visitors.

Where to stay

The Bay Guernsey (thebayguernsey.co.uk) has six lovely self-catering apartments with well-equipped kitchens, a tennis court and heated swimming pool, metres from Pembroke Bay. A three-bedroom apartment for six starts from £1,200 per week. Luxury country house hotel Stocks (stockshotel.com; double rooms from £360, including breakfast) is ideal for a secluded stay on Sark, with its outdoor pool, restaurant and bar.

HOW TO GET THERE

Ferries depart from Poole and Portsmouth to Guernsey six times a day (condorferries.co.uk; from £460 return for four adults and one car). Local airline Aurigny (aurigny.com) offers direct flights from multiple UK airports. Regular ferries run onwards from Guernsey to Sark (sarkshipping.gg) and Herm (traveltrident.com). For more information, see visitguernsey.com

WORDS: LAUREN JARVIS. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, VISIT GUERNSEY/CHRIS GEORGE

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Tips, tricks & buys

GARDEN notes

Majestic ideas for spring

ROYAL TREATMENT

Celebrate the coronation with some patriotic planting. King Charles' favourite plant is delphinium, while the Queen Consort loves the acid-green flowers of lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*). Both these perennials adore the sun and work beautifully together – delphiniums reaching for the sky at the back of a border and lady's mantle creating a stir at the front. For true-blue spires, try *delphinium* 'Blue Nile' (1.5m).

Lady's mantle

***Delphinium* 'Blue Nile'**

WOOL COMPOST
WOOL COMPOST for TOMATOES
GROW ORGANIC

CLEVER COMPOST

If you want to reduce your use of peat – or cut it out altogether – look for composts that include alternative ingredients, such as bark, wood fibre or coir. Dalefoot Composts, based in the Lake District, uses local, renewable materials such as sheep's wool, bracken and comfrey. It makes a great range of composts, including seed and potting blends: find out more at dalefootcomposts.co.uk

GARDEN TO VISIT NOW

Tiptoe around one of Europe's top tulip displays in the grand surrounds of Arundel Castle, West Sussex. As well as container displays and a labyrinth, there's a special planting of 'Kingsblood' for the coronation.

✱ arundelcastle.org

3 OF THE BEST…

Bedding blooms for hanging baskets

BEGONIA 'APRICOT SHADES'

Brighten up a dull corner with the honeyed tones of this tender begonia.

IVY-LEAF GERANIUM

Get a Mediterranean vibe with trailing geraniums, like drought-tolerant 'Pink Sybil'.

CALIBRACHOA

Grow 'Million Bells Blue' for a cascade of dainty petunia-like blooms in striking purple-blue.

WORDS: CHRIS MORLEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, CLIVE NICHOLS, GETTY

papier d'arménie

Laundry MAKES

Get out your sewing machine to create these pretty projects

TESTED BY US *so they work for you*

★☆☆ *Difficulty level*

Sort your clothes

YOU WILL NEED

- **70x76cm patterned fabric**
- **Pins**
- **Matching sewing thread**
- **1m length of cord or ribbon**

1 Fold the fabric in half widthways, with right sides together, and pin. Machine-stitch the long edge and one shorter edge, with a 1cm seam allowance. Neaten the seams with a zigzag stitch or use an overlocker. Turn right sides out and press.

2 Turn the open edge under by 1cm then 1cm again. Pin, press and machine-stitch around. Fold a cuff (wrong sides together) of 10cm and pin, then press. Measure and pin to the parallel two lines 5cm and 7cm down from the folded edge. Machine-stitch these lines, leaving a small gap in the lower one. Thread the cord, or ribbon, through the channel, knot the ends together, then draw up the bag.

TIP

Why not use a decorative pillowcase in place of fabric? Just add the cuff and channel for the drawstring.

Stitch a peg bag

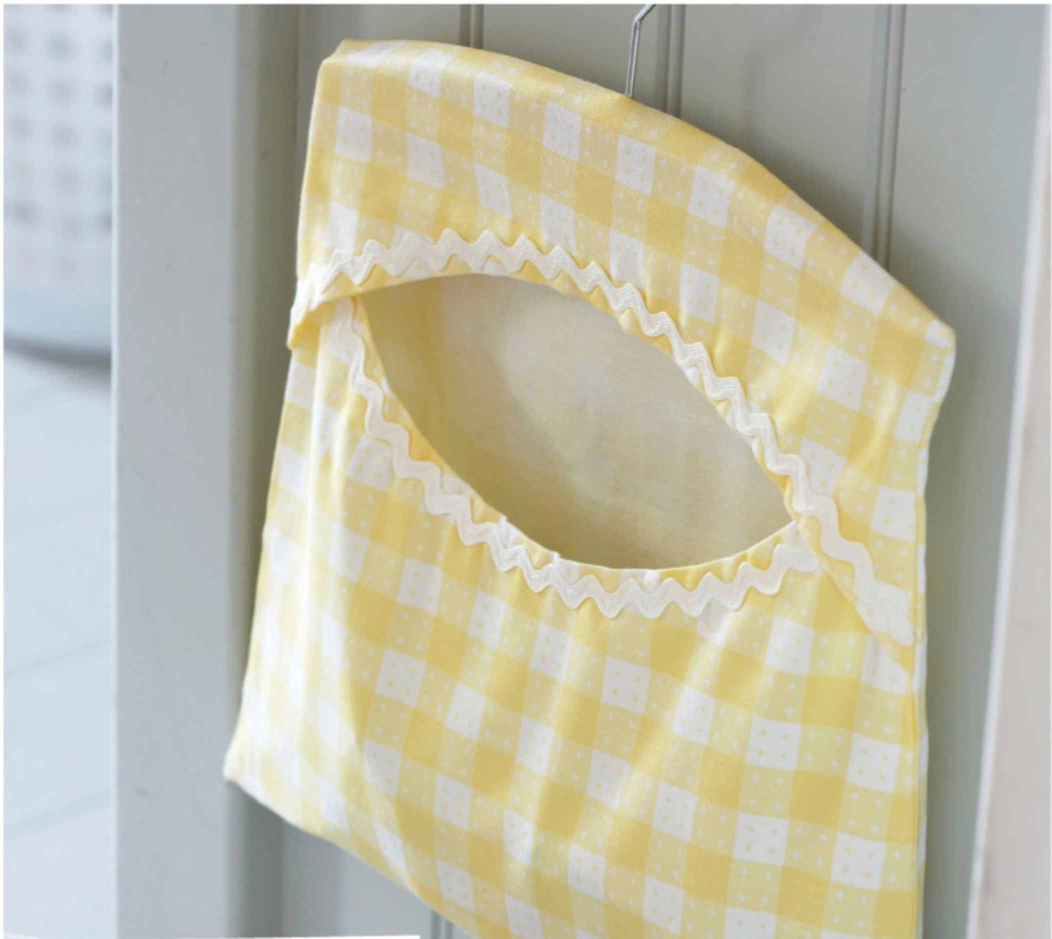
YOU WILL NEED

- **Yellow gingham fabric**
- **Small coat hanger**
- **Fabric marker**
- **Rickrack trim**
- **Scissors and pins**
- **Matching sewing thread**

1 Cut a piece of fabric the width of a small coat hanger plus 2x80cm. With right sides together, fold down the fabric by 20cm (so it's now 60cm long).

2 Place the coat hanger on top of the fold and draw around the outline, allowing an extra 1cm for seams. Cut out, then cut a curve along the opposite straight edge and mirror the curve along the straight edge of the longer piece. Hem both of these curves, folding over 1cm, then 1cm again. Topstitch with rickrack trim.

3 Pin the two hanger shapes together, with right sides facing, then fold up the longer piece so the two curved edges overlap by 2cm at the sides. Machine-stitch around the peg bag, leaving a gap at the top of the hanger-shaped end for the hook. Turn right sides out and press. Pop in the hanger, feeding the hook through the gap.



Disguise appliances

YOU WILL NEED

- **Patterned cotton fabric**
- **Matching sewing thread**
- **Net curtain wire**
- **O-hooks**
- **Scissors and pins**

1 Measure the opening that needs to be covered (the width and height). Cut a piece of fabric 1.5 times the width by height, plus 6cm.

2 Turn over 1cm and 1cm again along the bottom and two side edges. Pin, press and machine-stitch. At the top, turn over 2cm, then 2cm again, to form a channel for the net-curtain wire. Pin, press and machine-stitch.

3 Measure and cut a piece of curtain wire to fit the opening, pulling taut. Thread it through the channel and fix O-hooks to each end and cup hooks to the underside of the worktop. Hang the curtain.

FEATURE AND PHOTOS: FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

MOVING on

It was a fresh start for Alison, only now, she feared she'd made a terrible mistake

It was an awful thing to admit but this house move had been a really big mistake.

Alison shook her head as she waited for the kettle to boil. She could hardly believe it. She had only lived here for a month but the events of that morning were the final straw.

Her eyes misted over as she gazed down the long and still unfamiliar garden. This was what had attracted her to the place. She'd wanted a fresh start and she loved gardening. But it had been too cold to go out and spend time clearing and weeding.

What the estate agent had described as a 'charming cottage border' was currently a tangle of shrubs and brambles.

'Give it at least a year, Mum. You've been talking about it for ages – even before Dad died.'

Her daughter was right. Alison had always dreamt of settling in this village with Jim. It was only an hour from the nearest town, where they had spent their working lives. The village school was at the end of the high street, and from her bedroom window, Alison had a view of the church.

Across the road was the lane that led down to the river. It was a rambler's paradise and she often saw dog walkers and fishermen passing her gate.

Laburnum Cottage had been described as idyllic on the sales particulars, and she had quickly agreed to buy it after viewing it with Clare.

Her daughter had tried hard to cheer her up when she mentioned her reservations.

'Why don't you get a dog, Mum? It would help you to keep fit and you'd get to know people.'

'I don't want a dog!' In Alison's view, a pet wasn't the solution. It wasn't going to take away all these awful doubts.

* * * *

The previous Sunday, Alison had gone to church and introduced herself to the vicar, who had pressed her to have a coffee with the few stragglers who stayed behind when others rushed off to rescue the Sunday joint.

He introduced her to his wife, who had been deep in conversation with a small group of earnest-looking women.

'So you're the mystery lady at Laburnum Cottage,' the vicar's wife said. 'We heard someone had moved in.'

She'd always dreamt of settling in this village

One of the women piped up, 'My word, you've got your work cut out with that garden! I hope you like a challenge.'

'Yes, I do,' said Alison. 'It was one of the reasons for buying the house. Gardening is my hobby.'

'Well,' said the woman, 'in that case, let me introduce myself. I'm Jean and I lead the working group. We keep the church garden neat and tidy. We've just lost a couple of helpers. Would you care to join us? We're meeting up next week. Bring a trowel and kneeler!'

Before Alison could reply, another woman drained her coffee mug and said, 'See you then,' and that was it.

Alison smiled to herself. Her fate was sealed but she didn't mind a bit. At last she might get to know a few people. Most mornings she went for a walk by the river, where she occasionally chatted to a dog walker but, since moving, she had found few opportunities to socialise.

* * * *

By Thursday, Alison was quite looking forward to meeting up with the gardening team. As she drew near to the church, she could see a collection of bicycles and cars by the gate.

Jean's head appeared from behind the wall. 'Oh, so glad you've come! We're a bit short-handed today.'

'What would you like me to do?'

'Why not start over there.'

Jean wafted her hand vaguely in the direction of a large yew tree with a shed behind it. ‘When you hear me call, down tools and join us for a coffee.’

A woman who was hoeing around some gravestones smiled and waved. Alison recognised her as one of the women who had stayed behind in church on Sunday. She returned the wave, then made her way to her allotted spot.

Along this stretch of border were a collection of hydrangeas. Their papery flower heads were already beginning to disintegrate, so she set to work pruning and tidying them up.

She collected the debris and deposited it on the nearby compost heap. She then set about some roses, and finally worked her way along the path, gouging out ground elder and weeds that were encroaching on the gravel.

By the time she heard Jean’s voice summoning them to the vestry, she was pleasantly tired and pleased with her labours.

Just as she was getting to her feet, a large woman in a green apron came along trundling a wheelbarrow.

‘My goodness, you’ve given those shrubs a severe haircut, haven’t you?’ she said sharply. ‘Well, let’s hope we don’t get any late frosts or we’ve seen the last of them. I’m Marjorie, by the way. We haven’t met.’

‘Hello,’ said Alison, taken aback. But Marjorie had moved on and was hailing the man mowing the grass, who it turned out was called Sid and was quite hard of hearing. He needed several shouts and flailing hand signals from Marjorie to persuade him to switch off his machine and take a break.

* * * *

In the vestry, Alison found there was a circle of chairs. Jean motioned her towards a seat and handed her a coffee.

‘Now then, everyone. This is Alison. She’s just moved into Laburnum Cottage – you know, the Marshalls’ place.’

There were murmured greetings and someone passed her a plate of biscuits.

By the time they returned to work, everyone knew that Alison had one daughter, was a widow, had worked in a library and that she definitely wasn’t the cousin of Vera who served in the garage.

As she returned to her patch of garden, Jean came hurrying over.

‘I didn’t realise you were working here!’ she gasped, looking agitated. ‘When I said over there, I meant *right* over there, beyond the shed.’

‘Does it matter? said Alison, forcing herself to smile. ‘I’ve worked quite hard.’

Jean pulled on her gardening gloves. ‘It’s just that this is Laura’s patch.’

‘Laura?’ said Alison.

‘Yes, Laura. She would have been here, but she’s still at her daughter’s. Oh dear! I think she was planning to do the roses. She always does them. She’s a bit of a perfectionist. Never mind, it can’t be helped.’

‘I’d no idea,’ said Alison becoming quite pink.

‘Of course not. Now, let’s see. Perhaps you could help to rake the grass clippings. Sid does a good job but he’s not brilliant at clearing up.’

Alison thought that perhaps Sid also needed clearer instructions, but she did as she was told, and wandered among the gravestones raking and bagging. All the while, she patiently listened to Jean’s views on everything from the village bus service to choir practice, and why delphiniums should never be used on the main altar.

At the end of the morning, Alison walked home with mixed feelings. Some of the team had been friendly enough, but she couldn’t help being annoyed at the response to her well-meant efforts. She probably wouldn’t bother going again.

* * * *

Now, as she poured boiling water into the teapot, she thought again about her conversation with her daughter. Clare had only been trying to help, but Alison had been a little abrupt with her.

It had been almost a week since Clare had phoned, and that wasn’t like her. Alison couldn’t bear it if she’d upset her. What a mess everything seemed to be.

> ‘You’ve given those shrubs a severe haircut’

As she carried her tray into the lounge, the doorbell rang. A middle-aged woman with fair hair stood on the step. She was holding a bunch of pink roses.

‘You must be Alison, I’m sorry I’ve left this so late but I’ve been away. I’m your neighbour.’ She gestured towards the house just along the road and handed over the flowers.

‘Oh that is so kind of you!’ said Alison. ‘Have you time for a cup of tea?’

‘Yes please. I’ve been driving all afternoon. My daughter was ill and I’ve been staying with them for a week or two, to help with childcare. I was so pleased to hear that you had moved in. The Marshalls were nice enough, but they kept themselves to themselves. Anyway, I wanted to thank you for stepping into the breach this morning in the church garden – I’m Laura by the way.’

Alison swallowed, then poured a second cup of tea and handed her neighbour a slice of cake. ‘I’m afraid I may have stepped on your toes,’ she said. ‘I pruned your roses.’

‘They’re not *my* roses,’ Laura replied. ‘Don’t tell me – Jean! That woman has an uncanny knack of upsetting people. She and Marjorie do tend to throw their weight around. I gather they upset one of the flower arrangers while I was away. The vicar’s been roped in to referee. Anyway, no need to worry. I’ll be there next week, and the rest of the crowd are very welcoming – when they get the chance.’

Laura settled back into her chair and pointed to her plate. ‘This cake is very good. I don’t suppose you’d be willing to make one for the fete next Saturday? What with one thing and another, I’ve not had time to sort it out. The last thing I want is to incur the wrath of Jean and Marjorie. I could do with a hand serving if you’re free’

Alison smiled. ‘I’d be happy to help you.’

When Laura left, Alison walked with her to the gate. ‘You are so lucky with this garden. In a few weeks, you’ll have a wonderful display of tulips and forget-me-nots. It’s always a picture at this time of year.’

* * * *

Waving Laura off and closing the door, Alison noticed she had a missed call from Clare. With some trepidation she rang back.

‘Mum, I’m so sorry not to have been in touch. I’ve had a crisis at work, and I feel dreadful because I wasn’t very sympathetic when you were upset last week.’

‘Oh don’t worry about that, love,’ said Alison. ‘I was having a bad day, that’s all.’

She picked up the roses and walked into the kitchen, then smiled as she looked out at the garden.

‘Anyway, Clare. I’ve been thinking about what you said the other day. You were right. It might be quite nice to get a dog.’

THE END

Diane McKay, 2023

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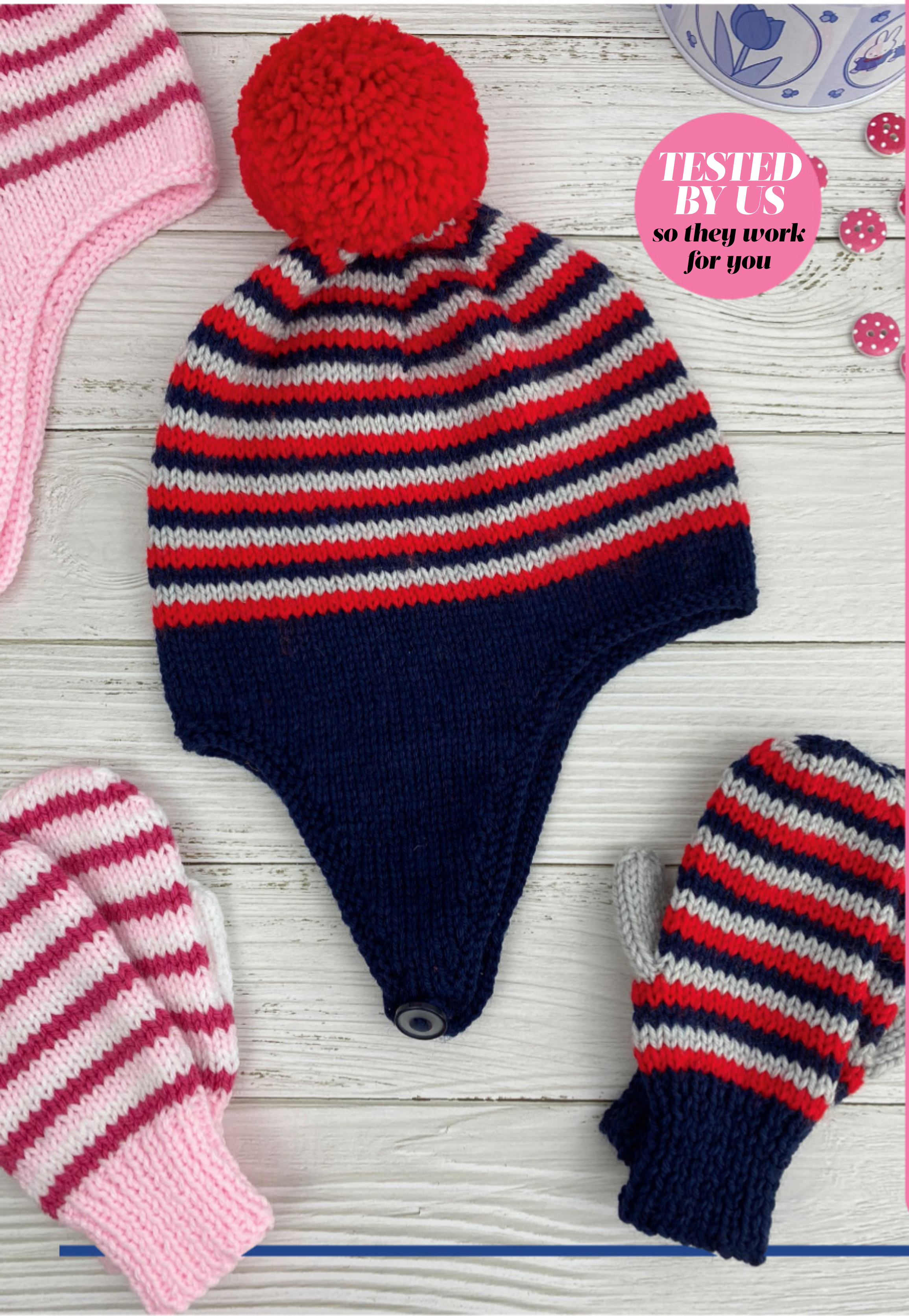
Hats off

Our cosy accessories are knitted in matching stripes



★★☆ **Difficulty level**

MEASUREMENTS

To fit approximate ages 6-12 (12-24) (24-36) months.
Hat brim circumference 38.75 (42) (45.5)cm/15½ (16½) (18)in.
Mitten palm circumference 12 (14) (15)cm/4¾ (5½) (6)in.

MATERIALS

Navy hat and mittens: 1 x 50g (163m) ball of Emu Treasure DK (55% nylon, 45% acrylic) in each of Navy (512), Red (Bright Red 513) and Grey (Silver 509)*.
Pink hat and mittens: 1 x 50g (163m) ball of Emu Treasure DK (55% nylon, 45% acrylic) in each of Baby Pink (505), Hot Pink (510) and White (500)*.
For both: Pair of 3.75mm (No. 9) knitting needles; 3.25mm (No. 10) circular knitting needle; stitch holders; 1 button.
Yarn is available from theknittingnetwork.co.uk.

TENSION

24 stitches and 34 rows, to 10x10cm, over stocking stitch, using 3.75mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

K, knit; **kfb**, increase (by knitting into front and back of same st); **nil**, meaning nothing is worked here for this size; **p**, purl; **pfb**, increase (by purling into front and back of same st); **p2togb**, p2tog through back of sts (to decrease); **rem**, remaining; **rep**, repeat; **skpo**, slip 1, k1, pass slip st over (to decrease 1 st); **sl**, slip; **ss**, stocking stitch (k on the right side and p on the wrong side); **st(s)**, stitch(es); **tog**, together (work as many sts together as stated).

NOTE

Yarn amounts are based on average requirements and are therefore approximate. Instructions are given for small size. Where they vary, work figures in round brackets for larger sizes. Figures in square brackets are worked as stated after 2nd bracket.

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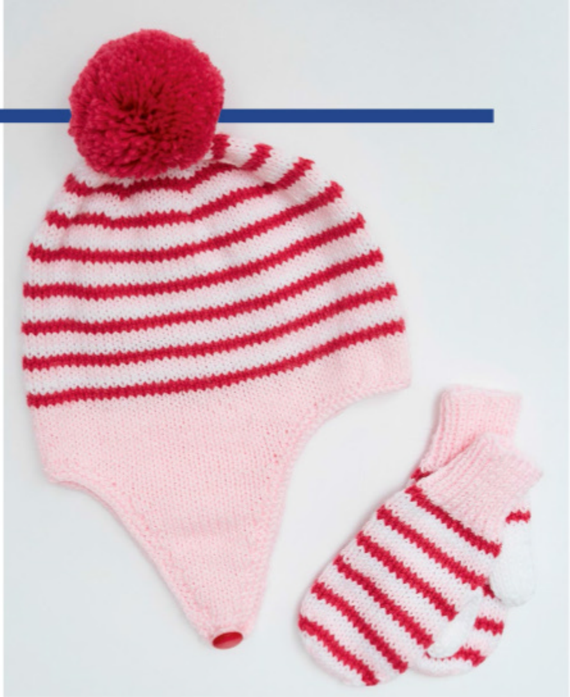
* YARN SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

Instructions overleaf



NAVY HAT (pictured on p47)

Colour stripe pattern

2 rows Navy, 2 rows Grey, 2 rows Red.

With 3.75mm needles and Red, cast on 9 sts.

1st row (wrong side): [Pfb in next st] 8 times, p1 – 17 sts.

2nd row: K1, [kfb, k1] 8 times – 25 sts.

Change to Navy.

3rd row: P.

4th row: K1, [kfb, k2] 8 times – 33 sts.

Change to Grey.

5th row: P.

6th row: K1, [kfb, k3] 8 times – 41 sts.

Change to Red.

7th row: P.

8th row: K1, [kfb, k4] 8 times – 49 sts.

Change to Navy.

3rd to 8th rows set increase pattern. Keeping stripe pattern correct, continue to increase 8 sts on every right side row as set (by working 1 more st after each increase) until 89 (97) (105) sts.

Pattern 3 rows straight.

Next row: K1, [kfb, k21 (23) (25)] 4 times – 93 (101) (109) sts.

Pattern 22 (26) (30) rows straight.

In Navy only, ss 5 (7) (9) rows.

Shape ear flaps: Next row: K34 (36) (38), turn and work on these sts only for right ear flap.

Right ear flap: Next row: P1, p2togb, p to end – 33 (35) (37) sts.

Next row: K to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 32 (34) (36) sts.

Next row: P1, p2togb, p to end – 31 (33) (35) sts.

Next row: K2, k2tog, k2 and sl these 5 sts onto st holder, k to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 24 (26) (28) sts.

Next row: P to last 3 sts, p2tog, p1 – 1 st decreased.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 2 sts decreased.

Rep last 2 rows, once more.

P 1 row.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to end – 17 (19) (21) sts.

** P 1 row.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 2 sts decreased.

Ss 3 rows.

Rep last 4 rows, 5 (6) (7) times more – 5 sts.

Leave these sts on a st holder. **

With right side facing, sl next 25 (29) (33) sts of main hat onto st holder, rejoin Navy to rem sts and k to end – 34 (36) (38) sts.

Work on these sts only for left ear flap.

Left ear flap: Next row: P to last 3 sts, p2tog, p1 – 33 (35) (37) sts.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to end – 32 (34) (36) sts.

Next row: P to last 3 sts, p2tog, p1 – 31 (33) (35) sts.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to last 6 sts, turn and leave rem 6 sts on a st holder – 24 (26) (28) sts.

Next row: P1, p2togb, p to end – 1 st decreased.

Next row: K1, k2tog, k to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 2 sts decreased.

Rep last 2 rows once more. P 1 row.

Next row: K to last 3 sts, skpo, k1 – 17 (19) (21) sts.

Work from ** to ** as for right ear flap.

Lower edging: With right side facing and Navy, sl 5 sts from st holder onto 3.25mm circular needle, work around right ear flap thus: *** pick up and k25 (28) (31) sts along side edge of flap, k5 from end of flap, then pick up and k25 (28) (31) sts along other side of flap ***, k5 (6) (7), k2tog, k11 (13) (15), k2tog, k5 (6) (7) across face edge of main part, work from *** to *** around left ear flap, k2, k2tog, k2 across sts on st holder – 143 (159) (175) sts. K 1 row.

Next row: K30 (33) (36), kfb, k3, kfb, k73 (83) (93), kfb, k3, kfb, k30 (33) (36) – 147 (163) (179) sts.

Cast off knitwise, making button loop at end of left ear flap by working, [p1, k1] 3 times all in centre st, continuing to cast off after making each st.

Join back seam. With Red, make a large pompom and attach to top of hat. Sew on button.

NAVY MITTENS

Left mitten

With 3.75mm needles and Navy, cast on 29 (35) (41) sts.

1st rib row: K1, [p1, k1] to end.

2nd rib row: P1, [k1, p1] to end.

Rep last 2 rows, 6 (7) (8) times more.

Beginning with a k row, and working in ss and stripe pattern, work 6 (8) (12) rows. **

Shape thumb: Next row: K15 (18) (21), turn.

*** **Next row:** Cast on 3 sts, p these and next 5 (6) (8) sts, turn, cast on 3 sts – 11 (12) (14) sts.

Work on these 11 (12) (14) sts only, in last colour used, ss 8 (10) (12) rows.

Next row: K1 (nil) (nil), [k2tog] 5 (6) (7) times – 6 (6) (7) sts.

Break off yarn, thread through rem sts, gather and secure.

Join thumb seam. With right side facing, and using same yarn as for thumb, rejoin yarn to base of thumb, pick up and k5 (5) (7) sts from base of thumb, k to end – 29 (34) (40) sts.

3rd size only: Maintaining stripe pattern, ss 3 rows.

Next row: K2, [skpo, k14, k2tog] twice, k2 – (36) sts.

All sizes: Maintaining stripe pattern, ss 17 (21) (23) rows.

Next row: [K1, skpo, k9 (11) (12), k2tog] twice, k1 (2) (2). P 1 row.

Next row: [K1, skpo, k7 (9) (10), k2tog] twice, k1 (2) (2). P 1 row.

Next row: [K1, skpo, k5 (7) (8), k2tog] twice, k1 (2) (2).

Next row: P1 (2) (2), [p2tog, p3 (5) (6), p2togb, p1] twice – 13 (18) (20) sts. Cast off. Join seam.

Right mitten

Work as left mitten to **.

Shape thumb: Next row: K19 (23) (28), turn.

Complete as left mitten from *** to end.

For PINK SET (pictured above), use Baby Pink instead of Navy, White instead of Grey, Hot Pink instead of Red.

*** If you have any knitting and crochet questions, please contact Knitting Editor Lynne at lynne.rowe@futurenet.com**

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SERIAL PART 2

A sentimental JOURNEY

With memories flooding back, could Jessica really reconnect with her best friend?

THE STORY SO FAR

Jessica has lived for a year in Sóller, Majorca, where she runs her online business as a singing teacher. On the beach, she finds a bottle with a message inside. Jessica takes it to the restaurant of her friends Marta and Pepe, where they open it. A photo inside shows two middle-aged women, and the note says they are Veronica and Lillian. They launched their bottle 11 years ago from the USA – coincidentally in the same year Jessica and her friend Lizzy launched a message in a bottle from Brighton Pier. The girls were 12 at the time. Jessica decides to text the UK number on the note. She also tells Marta she and Lizzy (now a successful actor) have been estranged for a year, following an argument. Marta encourages Jessica to contact Lizzy. After battling fears of rejection, Jessica messages Lizzy, but receives a lukewarm response. Has she lost her best friend forever?

The next couple of days passed by in a bit of a blur. Jessica had taken on three new singing students and had been busier than usual. She was grateful for the extra work because it had left her less time to dwell on the situation with Lizzy.

She made a point of not tuning in online to *Hobson's Harbour*, the popular soap opera in which Lizzy was becoming a household name, and she tried to resist constantly checking her mobile for a text from her.

Jessica's disappointment following Lizzy's lukewarm response to her text the previous weekend meant she'd temporarily put Veronica and Lillian's message in a bottle to the back of her mind. It wasn't until Wednesday evening that she eventually texted the phone number that Veronica had included at the end of her message.

She had almost resigned herself to the fact that the number would be out of date, considering it had been 11 years since the two women had launched their bottle. She was therefore pleasantly surprised when, not half an hour after sending her text, she received a reply from Veronica.

Veronica expressed her delight and utter disbelief that the bottle had been discovered and thanked Jessica for contacting her.

It's simply wonderful, she wrote. *After 11 years! And that it should wash up in Sóller is all the more incredible.*

She explained that she and Lillian had shared a wonderful holiday in Sóller when they were in their 30s. *The place holds such special memories for us. It's almost impossible to believe our bottle took us back there.*

She concluded her message by asking if she could ring Jessica the following day for a proper chat, and Jessica happily agreed. Veronica's text had reawakened her interest in these two women. It was such an amazing coincidence that they had launched their bottle from a pier in Georgia one March morning, in exactly the same year as she and Lizzy had launched theirs from Brighton Pier.

Now it was even more incredible that Sóller held a special place in these two women's hearts. Jessica was intrigued by the coincidences and by the strange sense of fate they evoked.

'Old friends are the best'

****

Jessica was at the bottom of her garden, rescuing crickets from the little reservoir which served to water the orchards in the spring and summer months, when Veronica's call came.

'I hope it's not too late where you are,' Veronica said after introducing herself. And when Jessica reassured her, Veronica thanked her again for contacting her and expressed her disbelief at the discovery of the bottle. 'You can't imagine how thrilled Lillian and I were to get your message, Jessica,' she said, her voice quivering with excitement at the other end of the phone.

'I think I was just as excited as you when I found that bottle,' Jessica said, picturing the white-haired woman with the delicate features and intense blue eyes from the photo that had been included with the message in the bottle.

There was a silvery, musical quality to Veronica's voice, which perfectly matched the image Jessica had conjured up of her, and she wondered if she'd changed much in the intervening years.

'And I simply can't believe we washed up in Sóller, of all places!' Veronica sighed. 'The little labyrinthine streets and the lemon-coloured stone houses, and the way the mist hangs over the mountains in the morning, like a spray of

milk. And that enchanting train journey from Sóller to Palma through the mountains, and the almond groves. Oh, I could go on forever…'

'All those things are still here,' Jessica reassured her. 'I'm certain it's as beautiful as you remember it.'

Jessica could sense Veronica nodding dreamily.

'And you, Jessica, are you lucky enough to live there?'

Jessica told Veronica about her online singing lessons. She'd managed to build up quite a decent client base, she said, since setting up her website a year ago, and the work suited her perfectly, allowing her to live wherever she pleased.

She had intended to travel initially, to see the world. But she had instantly fallen in love with Sóller when she'd visited Majorca the previous spring and, so far, had been unable to leave.

'That doesn't surprise me in the least,' Veronica said. 'I can't think why Lillian and I never returned. Tell me, is the stone fountain still there, in the square?'

Jessica told her that it was, and it still served as an enchanting focal point for the customers frequenting the restaurants and bars surrounding the square.

Veronica sighed. 'I recall a little boy and girl dancing there together all evening. The girl wore a long turquoise dress and sparkling silver shoes. She had to take them off eventually because she slipped over every time the boy spun her around.'

Jessica laughed. 'Yes, the children are particularly drawn to the fountain. There's something magical about it, I think.'

There was a pause on the other end, as if Veronica was taking a few seconds to relish precious memories.

'Actually, your bottle ending up in Sóller isn't the only coincidence,' Jessica said, and she found herself telling Veronica about the bottle she and Lizzy had launched.

Veronica was delighted with the story. 'What an extraordinary coincidence!' she exclaimed. 'And how wonderful that you still have a friend from your schooldays. Old friends are the best, don't you think? Friends who really know you.'

Veronica had made the assumption that Jessica and Lizzy were still close, and Jessica didn't feel like contradicting her.

Instead, she decided to ask about Veronica and Lillian's travels and their current lives. But she hesitated, recalling how Veronica had hinted in her message in the bottle that her adventures with Lillian might be coming to an end. Had something happened to one of them to prevent them from travelling? Or had old age simply crept up on them?

'Where do you and Lillian live now?' Jessica asked, settling for a safe option.

Veronica told her she and Lillian had settled on the Kent coast seven years ago.

'I'm afraid Lillian and I have become a little set in our ways over recent years.' She gave a little resigned laugh. 'She reads enormous historical novels and, as for me, I collect things. Antiques and curios… original art. But I much preferred collecting memories. Those are our most precious possessions, don't you think?'

Jessica agreed. She'd detected a note of sadness in Veronica's voice when she talked about Lillian but she reminded herself not to pry. After all, she and Veronica had been complete strangers until yesterday.

* * * *

Jessica ordered a white wine in the square and sat for a while listening to a young man playing a saxophone, accompanied by an elderly man on a harmonica.

She found herself thinking about her phone call with Veronica earlier that evening. Old friends are the best, she'd said. Friends who really know you.

Jessica took out her phone and clicked onto Lizzy's Facebook Messenger page, noting that she was online. She began to type… *Hope all good with you, Lizzy. Great profile pic of you and the TV crew.*

Jessica was pleased when she saw that Lizzy was already typing a reply…

Lizzy: *Thanks. They're not a bad bunch. Hope all good in Sóller.*

J: *Yep, all good here. Drinking a glass of white in the square.*

L: *It's all right for some! Cooped up in the flat. It's tipping it down here in London.*

J: *I'm being serenaded by a saxophonist accompanied by a guy on harmonica.*

L: *Unusual combo!*

J: *I know! Is your dad still playing his French horn BTW?*

L: *I'm afraid so.*

Jessica smiled, recalling an amusing story from schooldays involving Lizzy's dad and his French horn. On his way to a Royal Philharmonic performance, deciding he needed a little more work on his glissando, he'd pulled onto the hard shoulder of the

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

M25 to practise and been reprimanded by the police.

J: *You're fab as Becks in Hobson's Harbour.*

L: *Thanks.* (Short pause)

J: *How's Aiden?*

Jessica immediately regretted her words. Mentioning Aiden would only remind Lizzy of their argument. She waited with baited breath, and was relieved when Lizzy started typing again.

L: *We broke up a while back.*

Jessica bit her lip, trying to gauge the best response to Lizzy's news. When she looked back at the screen, however, she saw that Lizzy had signed off with the words, *Sorry, got to dash.*

Jessica put her phone back in her pocket with a sigh.

* * * *

Early the following morning, Jessica followed the river into the centre of town. Shopkeepers were pulling up their shutters and sweeping the pavements in front of their premises. There had been a storm in the night and the town was holding onto the freshness of rainfall before heating up for the day.

Marta was waiting for her on the church steps in the square. Jessica sat beside her, and handed her a cup of coffee and a pastry, which she'd picked up on her way into town.

'I've got the whole morning to myself,' Marta sighed happily. Her nephew Tomeo was helping out in the restaurant for a while, allowing her and Pepe some breathing space.

'I'll have to be back by lunchtime though,' she added, grinning at Jessica. 'Before Tomeo starts running riot in the kitchen, serving tomato ketchup with the tortillas and using Pepe's precious wines to make jugs of sangria. You know what Pepe's like about that.'

Jessica laughed and nodded. She could still recall Pepe looking at her in horror and calling her a philistine when she'd made the mistake of ordering a Prosecco with Angel d'Or.

'The Majorcans didn't spend 600 years perfecting their superior orange liqueur for it to be murdered with Prosecco,' he'd said, wagging his finger at her and creasing his forehead into a mock frown.

Now, the two women tucked into their pastries. Jessica waited for the church bells to stop tolling before telling Marta about her conversation with Veronica.

'There's something intriguing about the two of them,' Jessica said. 'Veronica and I are keeping in touch. We've already arranged to chat again next week.'

'I still can't get over the coincidence of it all,' Marta said, chewing on her pastry thoughtfully. 'The same year, and now this link with Sóller. It almost seems like fate, doesn't it?'

Jessica nodded. 'That's exactly what I thought. I was even stupid enough to think it might bring Lizzy and I back together again, but that's looking unlikely.'

'Haven't you heard anything else from Lizzy?'

Jessica had told Marta about the text she'd sent to Lizzy the previous weekend and her less-than-enthusiastic response.

'I have, but it doesn't look like a reconciliation is on the cards, I'm afraid. I'm pretty sure she hates me.'

'I behaved like an idiot'

'I'm sure that's not the case, Jess,' Marta said.

Jessica shrugged. 'I messaged her on Facebook last night. It was all pretty non-committal stuff. You know, the weather, music…' And when Marta raised an eyebrow. 'The gist of it is, she signed off without even saying goodbye.'

'Maybe she needed the bathroom or had to take a call, or something.'

Jessica shook her head. 'I haven't told you the whole story.'

Marta looked at her questioningly, and Jessica found herself telling her about Aiden, the handsome actor that Lizzy had been dating at the time of their argument.

She explained how, after she and Lizzy had graduated from acting school, they had been given tickets for a charity event, raising money for the refurbishment of a 16th-century London theatre. Lizzy had hit it off with Aiden, who was one of the guests and also happened to be good friends with a stage director.

'Soon after that, Lizzy got her big break in her first important stage role, playing Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*. She was amazing in it,' Jessica added, sipping her coffee. 'It was quite a minor part really, but she completely stole the show.'

Marta nodded thoughtfully but remained silent, sensing there was more.

'I behaved like an idiot over Aiden,' Jessica said eventually, reddening in embarrassment as she spoke. 'I was pretty hideous to Lizzy, actually. Getting on at her for spending more time with him than with me and neglecting our friendship. Telling her she was selfish, wrapped up in herself. The irony is, all those things are so not Lizzy. She's the opposite, in fact. She was never anything but a good friend to me. I don't blame her for wanting nothing more to do with me.'

'You should ring her, Jess.' Marta fixed Jessica earnestly with her wide brown eyes. 'You need to actually speak to her. Texts aren't always the best in a situation like this.'

Jessica shook her head. 'What if she tells me to get lost and that she never wants to hear from me again?'

'I doubt very much she'll do that, but I think it's a risk you might have to take if you want your friend back.' Marta smiled encouragingly. 'At times, we have to step outside of our comfort zone, Jess, if something's important enough to us.'

* * * *

Jessica was surprised at how nervous she felt at the prospect of phoning Lizzy. She spent the evening after her conversation with Marta wandering backwards and forwards from the house to the garden, feeding cherry tomatoes to the chickens and swinging restlessly on the seat in the garden.

Taking in deep breaths of aromatic air, she gazed across the orchards to the mountains, listening to the gentle toc-toc of the wind chimes. She knew that Marta was right, of course, so why was it proving so difficult to make that call?

She took her phone out of her pocket for the umpteenth time and stared at Lizzy's number on the screen, willing herself to call.

Lizzy had been there for her, through the happy times and the sad. She had always taken her side, even when she'd been in the wrong. She had listened and never judged.

Jessica suddenly became acutely aware of how important this phone call could be. How crucial it was that she say the right thing. She simply had to win back the trust of her old friend.

Her heart pounded as she pressed on Lizzy's number and it started to ring.

Then… 'Hello…'

TO BE CONTINUED

Amanda Batham, 2023

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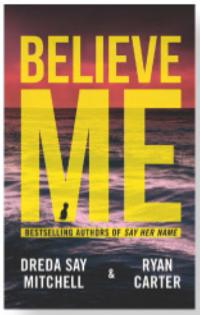
Book club

Zoe West shares her favourite picks for the week

Believe Me


BELIEVE ME
BESTSELLING AUTHORS OF SAY HER NAME
DREDA SAY MITCHELL & RYAN CARTER

by Dreda Say Mitchell and Ryan Carter (£8.99, PB, Thomas & Mercer)
In this twisty thriller from the successful crime-writing duo we meet lawyer Gabby. Working on a property dispute, a name she recognises appears on the title deeds: her mother, who died 25 years earlier, aged 40, from an undiagnosed illness. Gabby's 40th is approaching and she, too, starts to experience pains. Might she meet an early end? Does the property dispute hold any answers? A compelling psychological mystery that will keep you guessing.

Prize Women

by Caroline Lea (£18.99, HB, Penguin)
Some subjects seem even far-fetched for fiction, but The Great Stork Derby was not fictitious. Based on true events, Canadian millionaire Charles Vance Millar offered up a large sum of money in his will to women who could produce the most babies between 1926 and 1936. This was during The Great Depression and, as the situation became desperate, best friends Lily de Marco and Mae Thebault, from very different backgrounds, soon became competitors in a race for the money. With obvious consequences, this heartbreaking story explores friendship, strength and the fight to survive.

Woman's Weekly LOVES

PRIZE WOMEN
'Enthralling' STACEY HALLS
'Beautiful' SARA COLLINS
CAROLINE LEA

Three Nights in Italy

Three women. One secret. An unforgettable journey.
three nights in italy
olivia beirne

by Olivia Beirne (£10.99, PB, Headline)
One Italian getaway is about to change the lives of three women forever. Zoe travels to Italy to see her grandmother one last time, heartbroken but determined to say goodbye. Harriet refuses to be left behind – after all, it's the perfect escape from her horrible job. Ange is okay on the surface of things, but fears her daughter Zoe is slipping away from her. An unexpected arrival leads all three women to confront truths they've been avoiding for years. Olivia Beirne weaves a tender, wise tale about love and loss that will whisk you away to sun-drenched Sulmona.

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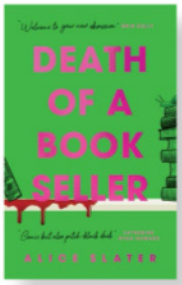
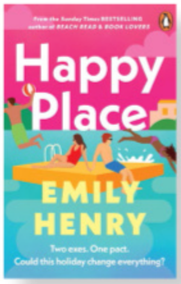
Woman's Weekly
FLATTER TUMMY
LOW-CAL

Death of a Bookseller


DEATH OF A BOOKSELLER
ALICE SLATER

by Alice Slater (£14.99, HB, Hodder & Stoughton)
Booksellers Laura and Roach are quite different. Antisocial Roach is fascinated by true crime horrors, while Laura prefers to remember the innocent victims. But as Roach becomes obsessed with Laura's past and the secret she is keeping, are her murder fantasies about to become a reality? Fast-paced with a great finale you won't see coming, it begs the question: how well do you know your colleagues? Or trust them?

Happy Place


Happy Place
EMILY HENRY
Two exes. One pact.
Could this holiday change everything?

by Emily Henry (£14.99, HB, Penguin)
Emily Henry's books should be prescribed. Not only will they make you happy, her latest may just make you fall in love with falling in love again. Meet Harriet and Wyn, the perfect couple – until they weren't. They broke up six months ago but haven't told their best friends. They don't want to ruin their week-long holiday to their happy place, so they'll pretend to be together. How hard can it be? Cue a humorous, nostalgic and deeply romantic story set in picturesque Maine. Absolutely dreamy.

GET IN TOUCH

and let us know what you're reading – we love to hear your recommendations. Email zoe.west@futurenet.com or drop us a tweet @zoeannewest

Puzzle TIME

Wordwise

You have 15 minutes to find as many words as possible using the letters in the grid. Each word must contain four or more letters, one of which must be the central square. No proper nouns, plurals or foreign words are allowed. There is one nine-letter word in the grid, for which the clue is: **Took priority.**

A	U	R
T	**K**	O
N	D	E

Average = 15 More than 35 = well done

LINKWORDS

Fit 10 words into the grid so that each links with the end of the word on its left and the beginning of the one on the right. Then unscramble the letters in the shaded squares to make a word. **CLUE: Bacteria that causes food poisoning.**

SUSPENSION						▨	**HAND**
IN				▨			**LAND**
WAY		▨					**PEN**
CREST			▨				**IDOL**
SNOW	▨						**STALL**
RING			▨				**FOOD**
ROPE			▨				**NECK**
TRADITIONAL					▨		**BUILT**
STOCKING				▨			**CAP**
TOP		▨					**SPLIT**

SUDOKU

To solve this puzzle, fill in the grid so that each 3 x 3 box, each row and each column contains the numbers 1-9.

	1		5	3		4		
2			1				5	
4		5			2		7	
	7			9				8
		9				6	4	
1				2	6			
	8		6			9		7
7					3	5		2
		6		5	7		8	

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

Codeword

A codeword is like a crossword puzzle but there are no clues!

Every letter of the alphabet has been replaced by a number, the same number representing the same letter throughout the puzzle. Just decide which letter is represented by which number. To start you off, we've revealed the codes for three letters. Once you've filled in these letters throughout the puzzle, you'll have enough info to guess words and discover other letters. Use the letter checklist and letter grid to keep track of the letters you have found.

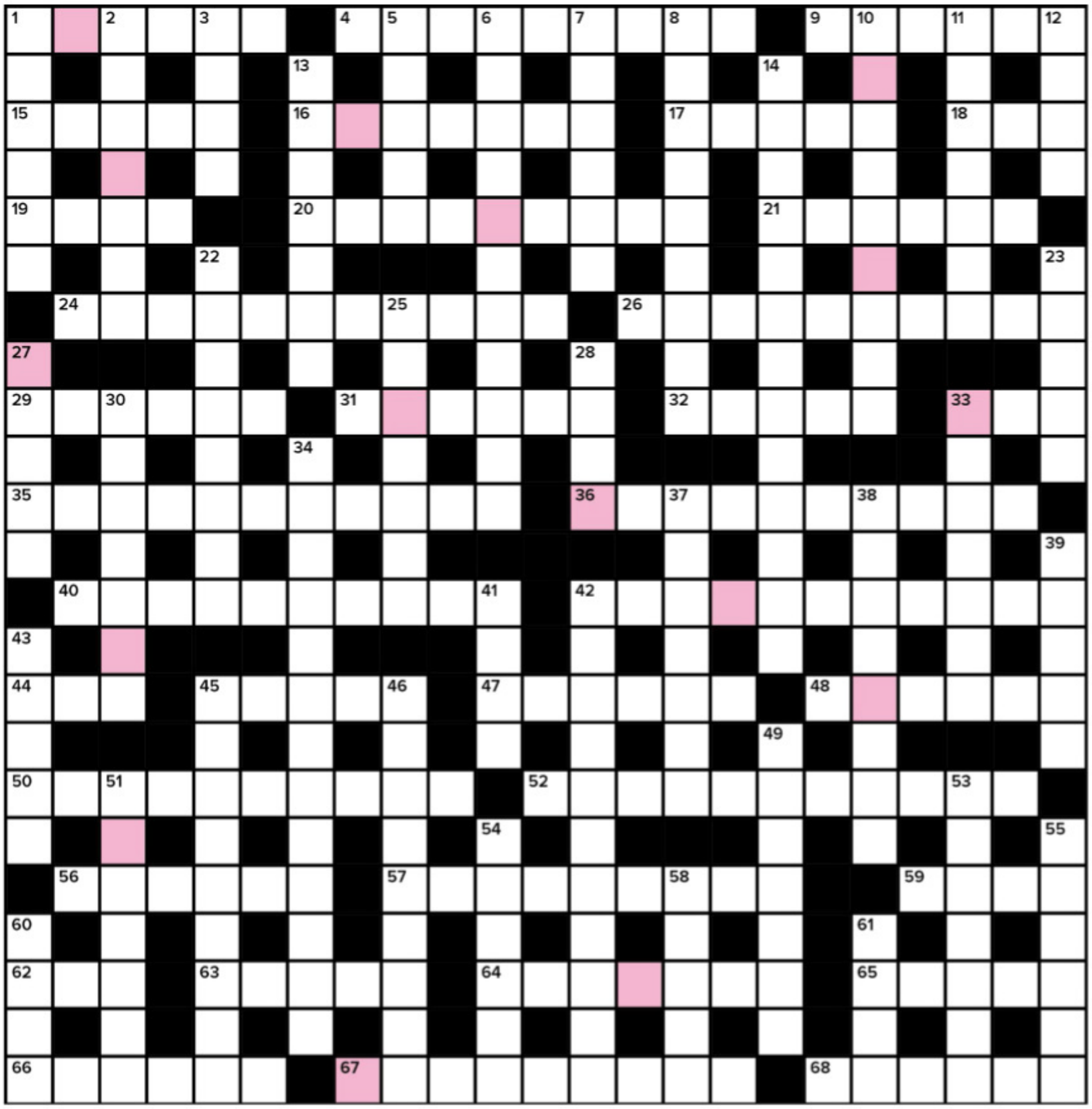
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T		M						O				
14	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**

A B C D E F G H I J K L ~~M~~ N ~~O~~ P Q R S ~~T~~ U V W X Y Z

■	6	■	20	■	14	■	■	■	3 M	■	23	■	21	■
19	10	12	16	1	21	1	18	■	12	16	18	9	16	26
■	3	■	9	■	16	■	26	■	5	■	23	■	19	■
23	8	26	17	■	25	26	24	21	5	4	1	7	10	24
■	26	■	■	■	12	■	24	■	9 O	■	26	■	26	■
1	2	21	13	12	24	■	9	8	1 T	21	3	21	23	3
■	■	■	10	■	9	■	17	■	■	■	12	■	1	■
■	8	12	1	2	9	24	■	23	20	12	1	26	23	■
■	2	■	1	■	■	■	4	■	16	■	21	■	■	■
24	21	20	26	12	13	24	26	■	26	22	15	21	1	26
■	23	■	2	■	21	■	24	■	26	■	■	■	26	■
15	9	3	3	26	2	15	21	12	24	■	11	21	16	15
■	16	■	21	■	1	■	10	■	21	■	9	■	16	■
4	26	12	24	1	4	■	3	12	16	25	9	24	21	16
■	2	■	20	■	23	■	■	■	5	■	3	■	23	■

Jumbo puzzle

Read down the letters in the shaded squares to spell out **a nursery rhyme (7,3,6).**



ACROSS

1 Parent (6)
4 Looks like (9)
9 Rushed (6)
15 London cricket ground (5)
16 Least difficult (7)
17 Racetrack condition (5)
18 Bloke (3)
19 Tow (4)
20 Mature (4-5)
21 Toughen steel (6)
24 Likenesses (11)
26 Worthwhile (10)
29 Dough (6)
31 Giving money (6)
32 Knocks senseless (5)
33 Short sleep (3)
35 Circuitry (11)
36 TV series, *Upstairs* ___ (10)
40 Captured (10)
42 Stockpiles (11)
44 In addition to (3)
45 The press (5)
47 Tinned (6)
48 Entertained (6)
50 Depict (10)
52 Demolition (11)
56 Away (6)
57 Facial hair (9)
59 Blend (4)
62 Dine (3)
63 Phantom (5)
64 Radioactive element (7)
65 Fruit (5)
66 Mistakes (6)
67 Dispersed (9)
68 Shuts (6)

DOWN

1 Tune (6)
2 Cyclone (7)
3 Direction (4)
5 Artist's stand (5)
6 Unforeseen occurrences (11)
7 Garment fastener (6)
8 Mechanics (9)
10 Quarrels (9)
11 Reflexive pronoun (7)
12 Ridge of sand (4)
13 Act (7)
14 Noble (13)
22 Worker (8)
23 Flutters (5)
25 Railway stop (7)
27 Rapidity (5)
28 Elderly (4)
30 Cooked (7)
33 Jumpy (7)
34 Deliberation (13)
37 Least tame (7)
38 Tries (8)
39 Stage whisper (5)
41 Waterfowl (4)
42 Sharpen one's focus (11)
43 Ancient language (5)
45 Courier (9)
46 Mechanical (9)
49 Exhibitions halls (7)
51 Shellfish (7)
53 Sea creature (7)
54 Summer month (6)
55 Commands (6)
58 Unlawful act (5)
60 This place (4)
61 Fingertip cover (4)

*** The answers for this week's puzzles are on the horoscopes page.**

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

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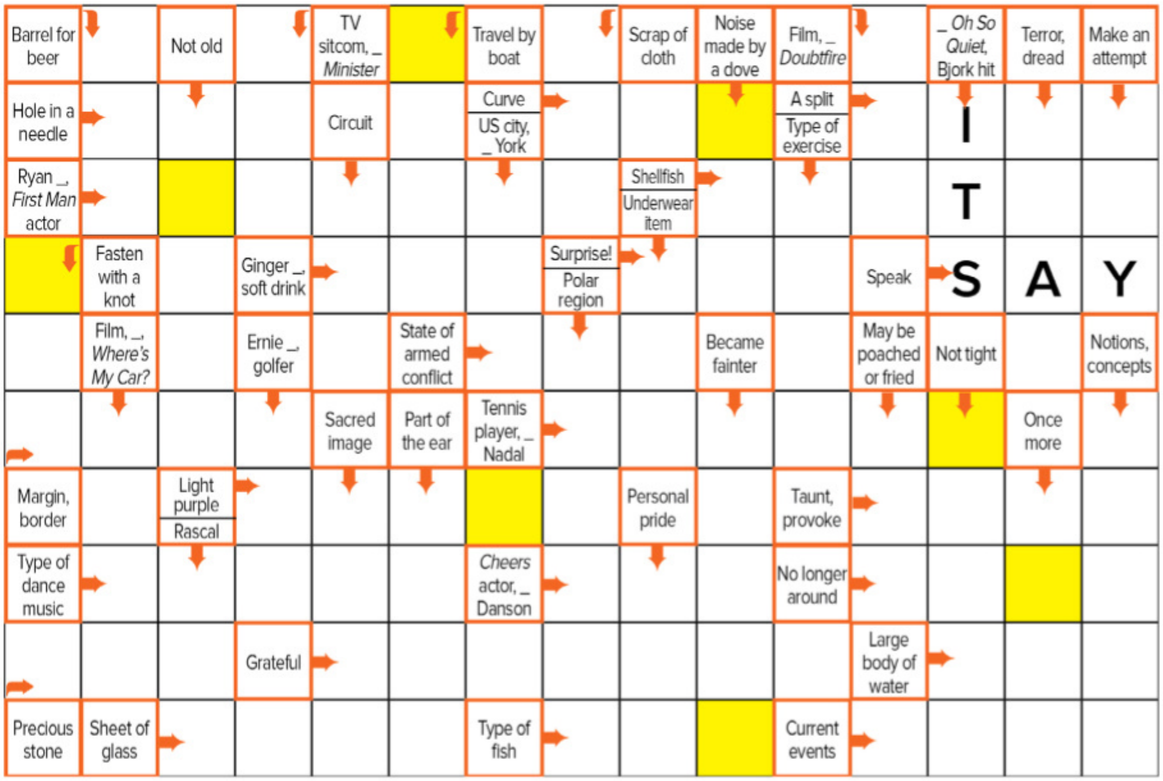
Puzzle *TIME*

Arrow word

The Darien scheme, a failed attempt to establish a colony in what is now Panama, nearly bankrupted which country in the late 17th century? Solve the puzzle by following the arrows and writing in your answers. Then read down the letters in the shaded squares to find the answer.

YOUR ANSWER:


Barrel for beer
Not old
TV sitcom, _ *Minister*
Travel by boat
Scrap of cloth
Noise made by a dove
Film, _ *Doubtfire*
_ *Oh So Quiet*, Bjork hit
Terror, dread
Make an attempt
Hole in a needle
Circuit
Curve
US city, _ York
A split
Type of exercise
I
Ryan _, *First Man* actor
Shellfish
Underwear item
T
Fasten with a knot
Ginger _, soft drink
Surprise!
Polar region
Speak
S
A
Y
Film, _, *Where's My Car?*
Ernie _, golfer
State of armed conflict
Became fainter
May be poached or fried
Not tight
Notions, concepts
Sacred image
Part of the ear
Tennis player, _ Nadal
Once more
Margin, border
Light purple
Rascal
Personal pride
Taunt, provoke
Type of dance music
Cheers actor, _ Danson
No longer around
Grateful
Large body of water
Precious stone
Sheet of glass
Type of fish
Current events

WORDSEARCH

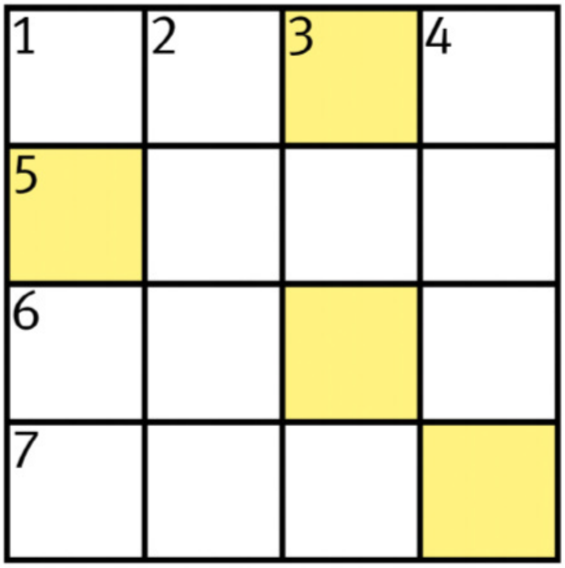
The ancient Sator Square, an arrangement of words that can be read up, down, left and right, includes which palindrome at its centre? The answer is the one missing from the grid.

YOUR ANSWER:

R	E	F	E	R	L	Y	Z	K
G	V	E	X	E	L	P	O	P
S	C	I	V	I	C	T	R	F
T	R	E	A	V	O	W	O	W
D	L	O	Y	O	P	M	T	K
E	K	X	T	E	N	A	A	A
E	J	U	E	O	L	D	T	Y
D	D	P	O	I	R	A	O	A
M	I	N	I	M	W	M	R	K

CIVIC
DEED
KAYAK
LEVEL
MADAM
MINIM
NOON
PEEP
POP
REFER
ROTATOR
ROTOR
TENET
TOOT
WOW

Mini crossword



The shaded boxes spell out a word.

ACROSS
1 Marjoram, say (4)
5 Opera song (4)
6 Hit with the foot (4)
7 Nagging pain (4)

DOWN
1 Maori war dance (4)
2 ___ Bana, *Munich* actor (4)
3 Wealthy (4)
4 Cook in an oven (4)

Your stars

For 26 April-2 May with Bracha Goldsmith

yourastrologysigns.com

ARIES 21 MAR – 20 APR
Don't rush into anything new this week. Go at your own pace and don't compromise your autonomy and independence.

TAURUS 21 APR – 21 MAY
This is a wonderful time for writing, journaling, speaking, teaching, coaching and generally sharing your knowledge and experience.

GEMINI 22 MAY – 21 JUN
Do what you can to keep your technology up to date. You may need a good clear-out, which will serve you very well.

CANCER 22 JUN – 23 JUL
Romantically, doors look set to be opening for you. New friendships and social circles are also under positive stars.

LEO 24 JUL – 23 AUG
Think carefully before committing to any enterprise that involves personal financial investment – have potential rewards been exaggerated?

VIRGO 24 AUG – 23 SEP
Your career or work direction may be shifting. Don't be afraid to step into something new, even if some retraining is needed.

LIBRA 24 SEP – 23 OCT
You are extremely resilient and whatever obstacles you face, you always come back stronger eventually. Believe in yourself!

SCORPIO 24 OCT – 22 NOV
You may need more time for rest and relaxation this week. If your body needs a nap or some time out, take notice. You will be glad you did.

SAGITTARIUS 23 NOV – 21 DEC
There may be many different claims on your time. Focus on tasks individually where you can and you'll feel more productive.

CAPRICORN 22 DEC – 20 JAN
If you appreciate yourself and your capabilities, so will others. All of your relationships stand to gain from a more confident you.

AQUARIUS 21 JAN – 19 FEB
Think carefully about your priorities and concentrate on your top three this week. This approach will guide you towards positive achievement.

PISCES 20 FEB – 20 MAR
Your intuition is becoming more and more accurate. Nurture it as much as you can – and take note of its important messages.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

JUMBO PUZZLE ACROSS: 1 Mother **4** Resembles **9** Dashed **15** Lord's **16** Easiest **17** Going **18** Man **19** Drag **20** Full-grown **21** Temper **24** Comparisons **26** Meaningful **29** Pastry **31** Paying **32** Stuns **33** Nap **35** Electronics **36** Downstairs **40** Imprisoned **42** Collections **44** And **45** Media **47** Canned **48** Amused **50** Illustrate **52** Destruction **56** Absent **57** Moustache **59** Stir **62** Eat **63** Ghost **64** Uranium **65** Apple **66** Errors **67** Scattered **68** Closes
DOWN: 1 Melody **2** Tornado **3** East **5** Easel **6** Emergencies **7** Button **8** Engineers **10** Arguments **11** Himself **12** Dune **13** Perform **14** Distinguished **22** Operator **23** Flaps **25** Station **27** Speed **28** Aged **30** Steamed **33** Nervous **34** Consideration **37** Wildest **38** Attempts **39** Aside **41** Duck **42** Concentrate **43** Latin **45** Messenger **46** Automatic **49** Museums **51** Lobster **53** Octopus **54** August **55** Orders **58** Crime **60** Here **61** Nail
Answer: ORANGES AND LEMONS

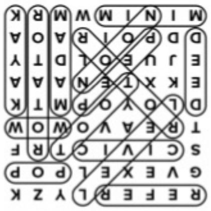
LINKWORD BRIDGE, COMMON, MARKER, FALLEN, SHOWER, FINGER, HALTER, CUSTOM, FILLER, BANANA. **Answer:** SALMONELLA

WORDWISE Dank, danker, dark, darken, dork, drake, drank, drunk, duke, dunk, dunker, kart, kendo, kern, knead, knot, knout, naked, nark, narked, nuke, nuked, oaken, okra, outrank, rake, raked, rank, ranked, take, taken, taker, tank, tanked, tanker, teak, toke, token, tonk, trek, trunk. **Answer:** OUTRANKED

SUDOKU

8	1	7	5	3	9	4	2	6
2	6	3	1	7	4	8	5	9
4	9	5	8	6	2	3	7	1
6	7	4	3	9	5	2	1	8
3	2	9	7	1	8	6	4	5
1	5	8	4	2	6	7	9	3
5	8	2	6	4	1	9	3	7
7	4	1	9	8	3	5	6	2
9	3	6	2	5	7	1	8	4

WORDSEARCH



R	E	F	E	R	L	Y	Z	K
G	V	E	X	E	L	P	O	P
S	C	I	V	I	C	T	R	F
T	R	E	A	V	O	W	O	W
D	L	O	Y	O	P	M	T	K
E	K	X	T	E	N	A	A	A
E	J	U	E	O	L	D	T	Y
D	D	P	O	I	R	A	O	A
M	I	N	I	M	W	M	R	K

Answer: Tenet

MINI XWORD

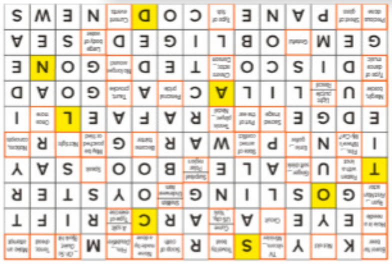
H	E	R	B
A	R	I	A
K	I	C	K
A	C	H	E

Answer: Race

CODEWORD

■	J	■	K	■	V	■	■	■	M	■	S	■	I	■
Q	U	A	N	T	I	T	Y	■	A	N	Y	O	N	E
■	M	■	O	■	N	■	E	■	G	■	S	■	Q	■
S	P	E	W	■	D	E	L	I	G	H	T	F	U	L
■	E	■	■	■	A	■	L	■	O	■	E	■	E	■
T	R	I	B	A	L	■	O	P	T	I	M	I	S	M
■	■	■	U	■	O	■	W	■	■	■	A	■	T	■
■	P	A	T	R	O	L	■	S	K	A	T	E	S	■
■	R	■	T	■	■	■	H	■	N	■	I	■	■	■
L	I	K	E	A	B	L	E	■	E	X	C	I	T	E
■	S	■	R	■	I	■	L	■	E	■	■	■	E	■
C	O	M	M	E	R	C	I	A	L	■	Z	I	N	C
■	N	■	I	■	T	■	U	■	I	■	O	■	N	■
H	E	A	L	T	H	■	M	A	N	D	O	L	I	N
■	R	■	K	■	S	■	■	■	G	■	M	■	S	■

ARROW WORD **Answer:** Scotland



IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE

EXPERT STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHIER TEETH

SUPER SPRING PASTA RECIPES

BRITAIN'S GLITTERING EUROVISION HISTORY

HOW TO GROW IRRESISTIBLE IRISES

ON SALE 3 May

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ipso. Regulated

ROSEMARY

Mr D goes TOPLESS

Is there such a thing as a 'grandad bod'?

"You should probably read these opening paragraphs while hiding behind the sofa because disturbing images might be involved. You'll risk it anyway? Well, don't say I didn't warn you.

We have a full-length mirror in our spare bedroom, and the other day I went in search of some pillowcases. Instead of pillowcases, I found Mr Dear, standing in front of the mirror and stripped to the waist.

That, by the way, was the disturbing image.

> *'If her next door hears, I shan't answer for the consequences'*

'Tell me honestly, love,' he said. 'Do you think I'm getting a bit fat?'

He turned so that I could examine the evidence in profile. He can be kind like that.

'I wouldn't say so,' I said. 'Not fat, as such.'

'You don't think I'm getting a bit of a dad bod?'

'I think you're long past the age of the dad bod,' I said, giving him a friendly prod in the dad bod area. 'Grandad bod, perhaps. Possibly great-grandad bod.'

'Give over,' he said, rubbing his stomach. 'So you don't think I've got a paunch?'

'No I don't, now stop fishing for compliments and pass me those pillowcases on the bed. Oh, and for goodness' sake put your shirt back on. If her next door hears you're going topless then I shan't answer for the consequences.'

The action now switches to the charity shop. To say it has been a quiet afternoon is a record-breaking understatement. Imagine the hushed library of a silent order of nuns and you'll have some idea of what a quiet afternoon it has been.

My sister Deb and I, the sole occupants of the shop, are staring out of the window and wondering where everybody has gone. It's as if the entire town has decamped to the seaside and forgotten to invite us.

'And there he was,' I said, 'topless in the spare bedroom and gazing at his stomach in the mirror.'

'There's no way Tom could have thought he was fat,' said Deb, who is very fond of Mr Dear. 'He's in great shape for his age.'

'I think that's part of the problem. He has put on a bit of weight, I suppose, but you'd need specialist detection equipment to find any evidence of a paunch.'

'Oh no! Is there specialist detection equipment which can detect a paunch?'

'Don't quibble. You know what I mean.'

We then paused for a brief flurry of excitement as Debs spotted somebody crossing the road and apparently heading this way, but it turned out to be a false alarm.

'It's not something that men used to bother about, is it?' said Deb.

'What's not?'

'Men never used to bother really about whether they might be putting on weight. I mean, can you ever remember Dad worrying that his belt was a bit tight? And he definitely had a bit of a belly on him.'

It is true that men never used to worry. Indeed this is the first time that Mr D has mentioned the matter. But perhaps he just worried in silence. He has always been sporty. He played rugby until he was quite decrepit, and still turns out for the cricket team when they can't find a proper wicketkeeper.

He also walks the dog every day and even goes to the gym, although not very often. Has he secretly been fretting?

'Perhaps men have just become more body-conscious,' I suggested.

'Oh, tell me about it,' said Debs. 'Do you remember Jack?'

I did not remember Jack.

'Come on, you must have met him. He popped round occasionally to do odd jobs.'

I still didn't remember Jack, but apparently he was in his early 40s and very fond of himself. 'He used to parade around the garden without his shirt on, showing off what he fondly believed were his muscles.'

'Did he have muscles?'

'Of a sort,' said Deb, 'but I didn't want to have them shoved down my throat day in, day out.'

Can you shove muscles down somebody's throat? I didn't get a chance to inquire because somebody actually came into the shop, but only to ask the way to the post office.

And so it was after the dullest of days that I arrived home to find an empty packet of two Tesco eclairs on the kitchen table, and Mr Dear looking rather sheepish. 'I got the shopping, and I thought I'd treat myself,' he said.

Could it be that male worries about the body beautiful have been slightly exaggerated?"

Rosie XX

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